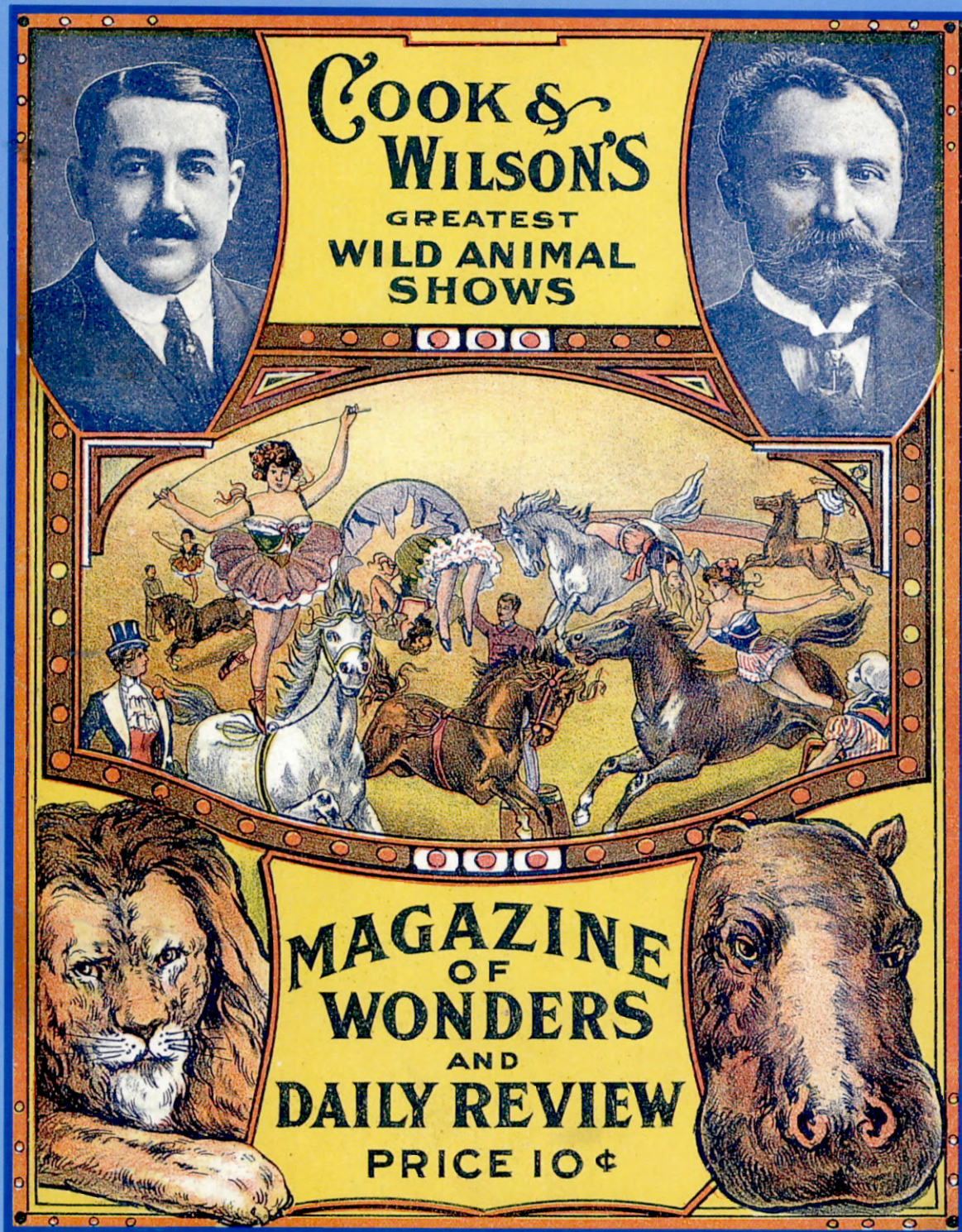


Bandwagon

THE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.

JULY-AUGUST 2007



BANDWAGON

THE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.

Vol. 51. No. 4

JULY-AUGUST 2007

FRED D. PFENING, JR.

EDITOR AND PUBLISHER

Fred D. Pfening III, Managing Editor

Bandwagon, The Journal of the Circus Historical Society, Inc. (USPS 406-390) (ISSN 0005-4968), is published bi-monthly by the Circus Historical Society, Inc., 1075 West Fifth Ave., Columbus, OH 43212-2691. Periodicals Postage Paid at Columbus, OH. Postmaster: Send address changes to Bandwagon, 1075 West Fifth Ave., Columbus, OH 43212-2691.

Editorial, advertising and circulation office is located at 2515 Dorset Rd., Columbus, OH 43221. Phone (614) 294-5361. Advertising rates are: Full page \$100, half page \$60, quarter page \$35. Minimum ad \$25.

Bandwagon, new membership and subscription rate: \$40.00 per year in the United States; \$44.00 per year in Canada and outside United States. Single copies \$4.00 plus \$2 postage. Please direct all concerns regarding address changes and lack of delivery to the editor. Membership applications can be found on the CHS web site <http://circushistory.org>.

CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC. <http://circushistory.org>. Robert F. Sabia, President, 3100 Parkside La., Williamsburg, VA 23185. Judith Griffin, Vice President, 519 N. Union St., Appleton, WI 54911-5031. Alan Campbell, Secretary-Treasurer, 600 Kings Peak Dr., Alpharetta, GA 30022-7844.

Trustees: Alan Campbell, 600 Kings Peak Dr., Alpharetta, GA 30022-7844. Judith Griffin, 519 N. Union St., Appleton, WI 54911-5031. Fred Dahlinger, Jr., 451 Roblee Rd., Baraboo, WI 53913; John McConnell, 1 Skyline Dr., Morristown, NJ 07960; Fred D. Pfening, Jr., 2515 Dorset Rd., Columbus, OH 43221; Fred D. Pfening III, 1075 W. Fifth Ave., Columbus, OH 43212; John F. Polacsek, 5980 Lannoo, Detroit, MI 48236; Richard J. Reynolds III, 1186 Warrenhall Lane N.E., Atlanta, GA 30319; Robert F. Sabia, 3100 Parkside La., Williamsburg, VA 23185; Al Stencell, 15 Lark St., Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M4L-3M5. Trustee Emeritus: Stuart L. Thayer.

THE FRONT COVER

The 1916 Cook & Wilson Circus only lasted one season. It was owned by D. Clinton Cook and Harry G. Wilson.

The show traveled on one advance car, four stock cars, six flats and three sleepers.

THE BACK COVER

This is the front cover of the 1918 Ringling Bros. Circus courier. The spec that year was In Days of Old.

Featured acts included rider May Wirth, aerialist Lillian Leitzel, and muscleman Johannes the Iclander.

NEW MEMBERS

Charles Robinson 4459
340 Chanounix Rd.
St. Davids, PA 19087-3612

Jim Mougey 4460
323 Third St. SE
Waverly, IA 50677-3511

Fleur H. & David M. Dowell 4461
314 Highway 79
Dover, TM 37058-5938

Jeff Anderson 4462
631 Union Mill Rd.
Mount Laurel, NJ 08054-9515

Ruth Luckasson 4463
1401 Columbia Dr. NE
Albuquerque, NM 87106-2632

Bruce G. Olson 4464
161 Hill St.
Whitinsville, MA 01588-1010

John H. Nicholls 4465
4 Verona St.
Nox Hill South
VIC 3138 Australia

Pamela Snyder 4466
10731 Desota Ave.
Chatsworth, CA 91311-1545

REINSTATED

Ernest Albrecht 2892
43 Ainsworth Ave.
East Brunswick, NJ 08816-1206

Larry J. Fancsalszki 3608
917 S. School St.
Mt. Prospect, IL 60056-4345

BANDWAGON BACK ISSUES

1966-Jan.-Feb.
1967-Nov.-Dec.
1968-All but Jan.-Feb.
1969-July-Aug., Sept.-Oct.
1970-All but July-Aug., Sept.-Oct.

1971-All but Mar.-Ap., May-June.

1972-All available.

1973-All but Nov.-Dec.

1974-All but Mar.-Ap., May-June.

1975-All available.

1976-All but Jan.-Feb., Nov.-Dec.

1977-All but Mar.-Ap.

1978-All available.

1979-All but Jan.-Feb.

1980-1986-All available.

1987-All but Nov.-Dec.

1988-2006-All available.

In addition to above many other issues are available going back to the 1960s. If you are in need of early issues write to the Editor.

Price is \$4.00 each. Add \$2.50 postage for one issue, \$5.00 for more than one issue. Please select substitutes in case we are out of any of above.

BANDWAGON BACK ISSUES 2515 DORSET RD. COLUMBUS, OH 43221

Hovey M. Bugess, Jr, 1092
45 First Ave., #5K
New York, NY 10003-9449

SEND DUES PAYMENTS NOW

If you have not as yet sent your CHS dues or subscription payment do so at once.

ADDRESS CHANGES

Please advise the Editor if you move. Your *Bandwagon* is returned with your new address, at a charge of \$1.80.

Your *Bandeagon* is also returned if you are temporarily away.

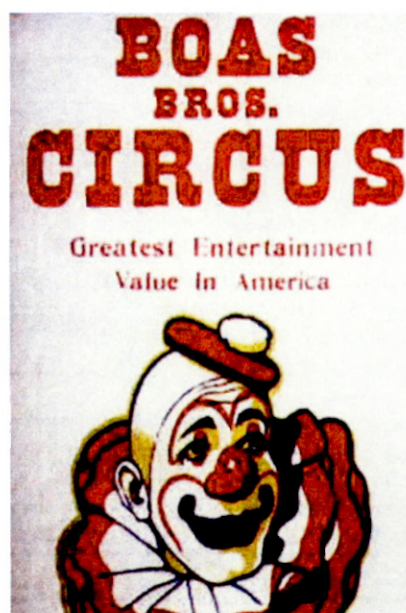
Replacement copies can not be sent.



Circus Kirk holds a unique place in circus history as the first and—during the years it was out—the only three ring, touring tented circus in which every cast and crew member was a high school, college or university student. Circus Kirk traveled for nine seasons (1969-1977) and was all the dream of one man, Dr. Charles W. "Doc" Boas, Ph.D.

Charles William Boas received a bachelor's degree in history from Lafayette College in Easton, Pennsylvania, before receiving a master's degree in 1950 from the University of Virginia and a doctorate in 1956 from the

Boas Bros. Circus window card used in 1968. Pfening Archives.



Dr. Charles "Doc" Boas and Rev. L. David Harris. Jim Kieffer collection.

University of Michigan in geography. He was an assistant professor at Michigan State from 1956 to 1961, when he left the halls of academe, sold his home, packed up his family and hit the sawdust trail with Penny Bros. Circus.

For the next six years, Boas fulfilled

Sleeper made from a school bus in 1969. Pfening Archives.

a childhood dream of running away with the circus, performing as a clown. In addition, he held various administrative positions starting as a booking agent for Carson & Barnes and Sells & Gray.

He came off the road in 1967 when his children needed a permanent address to attend school. He settled in York, Pennsylvania the next year and returned to college life to begin a 23-year engagement on the faculty of York College teaching his specialty of urban geography.



His real ambition, though, was to have his own circus. While a professor at York College in 1968, Boas located a small farm in nearby East Berlin and opened his winter quarters. The work of building a circus from scratch involved the construction of props, rigging, seating, tents and related equipment as well as restructuring vehicles to haul apparatus or act as sleeping units. Soon the entire Boas family put their lives into the circus. He asked his friend Don Brewer to accompany him on a trip to West Virginia to look over the leavings of Burling Bros. Circus, which had been operated by E. C. Burlingame from 1949 to 1955. Seeing it was junk, Boas bought nothing.

Boas did locate a 40 x 60 big top and some seats. The result was the Boas Bros. Circus, a small tented troupe that played central Pennsylvania in August 1968 and was a fore-runner of Circus Kirk. On a modest budget, the Boas family pulled the one-ring show through a month of touring and got it "back in the barn." It opened on August 8 in East Berlin and closed on August 23 in Dillsburg, Pennsylvania.

During the winter of 1968-1969 Boas met with the Rev. L David Harris, an Evangelical United Brethren pastor in Philadelphia and a circus fan who shared Doc's vision. He recommended that Boas ask the Central Pennsylvania Synod of the Lutheran Church in America (LCA) if it might be interested in helping support a circus as a summer youth project. Harris later founded Circus Kingdom, a church backed show.

The Youth Ministries Division of the LCA liked the idea of Circus Kirk. The division, in effect, "sponsored" the first summer tour in 1969 by loaning the project some money to get it started. The Rev. Robert Alexander was assigned as show pastor and church liaison. The title came from the Danish word for church, Kirk, and reflected the church auspices.

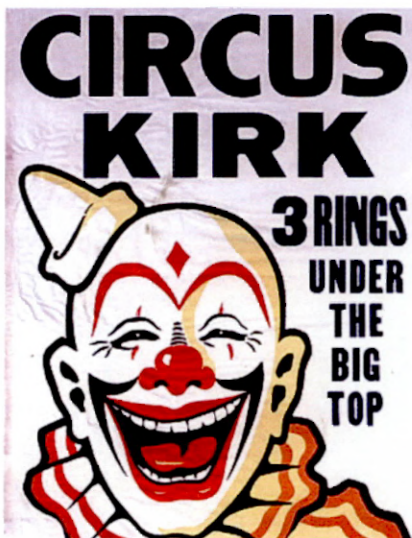
There was never a mandate from the church indicating that Circus Kirk be anything more than a summer project that showed a healthy group of hardworking kids as an example to other young adults across



America. Indeed, Boas was adamant that the purpose of Circus Kirk was not, and would never be, to "witness in the center ring." Circus Kirk was to be exactly what the name implied --a circus.

Nevertheless, during the first season of 1969, as described in Carl T. Uehling's book *Blood, Sweat & Love*, Circus Kirk did close with a finale that included a parade of banners touting such slogans as "Peace," "Love" and "Celebrate Life." In addition, Circus Kirk presented several clown sketches with "morals," circus style parables. One routine had two dissimilarly dressed sets of clowns building a bridge of paper plates through the center of the ring. The two groups of clowns fought over control of the ring, discovering that only through cooperation would they

Circus Kirk one sheet poster. John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Tibbals Digital collection.



The entire personnel of Circus Kirk in 1969. Jim Kieffer collection.

be able to "bridge a ring of brotherhood."

Uehling's preface told of Boas's first season: "The guiding spirit of Circus Kirk was Charles Boas. As an active churchman Doc talked the idea over with Roy Oswald. Roy is a young denominational official with responsibility for youth programming, and as a result of their conversations Circus Kirk was born.

"The plan that emerged called for Boas to expand his show, adding dormitory buses and other equipment, employ about thirty young people as workers and performers (for about fifty dollars a week), and to tour the state under the auspices of local congregations.

"Money for the purpose of the expansion was advanced by the denomination, and notices encouraging young people to apply for positions were sent to all congregations, as well as to Pennsylvania colleges.

"The circus encountered great difficulties throughout its season. Hailstones ruined the big top. Transmissions dropped out of the trucks. Sponsoring churches cancelled, or produced microscopic crowds. Doc estimated that they needed an average of five hundred dollars a day in receipts just to keep their heads above water. By the season's end they were in the hole."

A chapter titled "How We Bombed in Loch Haven" read in part: "Circus Kirk never played on a Sunday. They'd go from where they'd been on Saturday to where they'd be on Monday, and get acquainted with local people.

"Some of the kids would go to church. And usually a local church would supply a supper, and there would be something involving their youth group and circus youth."

Boas decided early on was that all members of the Kirk cast were to be currently registered college or university students, other than his own family and the other adult sponsors. In later years, this was amended to include some high school students with exceptional circus skills.

His call for performers brought responses from students as far away as New Orleans, such as first and second season ringmaster and trapeze artist Jeb Bourgoyne, as well as artists from the Wenatchee Youth Circus in Oregon. Eventually, a cast and crew of 35 took to the road in a one-state three-month tour.

In spite of Circus Kirk's aspirations, however, it was hardly a professional circus. Few of the students involved had true circus skills; rather, they had performance abilities that could be adapted to the circus ring. College gymnasts were transformed into acrobats. Theater majors became clowns. Until joining the Kirk as roustabouts, many crewmembers were unfamiliar with exotic tent rigging.

Also, none of the Kirk cast had ever endured the demands of rising

The Circus Kirk backyard in 1970. Pfening Archives.



Boas making side show opening in 1970. Jim Kieffer collection.

before dawn, driving 50 to a 100 miles or more to the next town, rais-



The Kirk midway in 1970. Pfening Archives.

ing the tents, setting rigging and props, doing two shows and tearing down by midnight, only to start the cycle of one-nighters again the next morning.

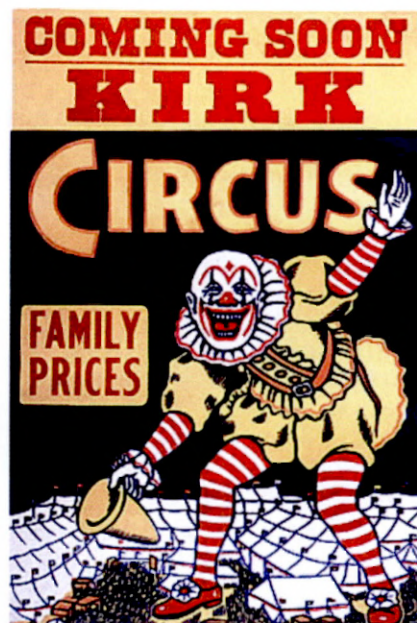
One of the weapons often used to fight depression, frustration and burnout was frequent meetings in which the company would sit around the curb of the center ring and discuss the show and interpersonal problems. Part group therapy and part motivational seminar, the meet-

ings did much to alleviate stress.

Uehling continued: "Another natural device to ease tension was the ever-present sense of humor, often found in the most unlikely places. Every day the donnicker, or portable toilet, seemed to boast a new sign. During the run of the season such scatological gems as the following appeared: 'Reserved Seats,' 'Pay Toilet--Deposit 10 Cents in Slot,' 'Please Don't Overload for a Brighter, Cleaner Wash,' and 'Do Not Throw Cigarette Butts in Toilet--They Get Soggy and Wet and Are Hard to Light.'

"The rolling stock of the first season was a veritable cacophony of vehicles. Their infamous donnicker was a wood framed oil drum pulled by the Boas family station wagon. A potato chip delivery truck became the advance wagon for the 24-hour man. One of the more creative

Another Kirk window card. John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Tibbals Digital collection.





Kirk stock truck in 1971. Pfening Archives.

conversions was turning old school busses, rigged with bunks and painted a bright silver to reflect heat, into sleeping quarters for the cast.

"In its first season Circus Kirk achieved its goal--to prove that



Kirk ticket trailer in 1970. Jim Kieffer collection.

young people of different races and creeds could work and live harmoniously under seemingly impossible conditions. To relate this historically to the 'outside' world, one has only to remember that 1969 was also the year of the first Vietnam War draft lottery. The 1969 tour opened in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania on May 24."

The performance included inclined wire walk, plate spinning, balancing beam, clowns, single trapeze, juggling, ponies, baton twirling, swinging ladder, unicycle, manege, supported ladders, Spanish web and a finale.

The big top was a 57-foot bale ring with 26 and 30foot middles. The show moved on 11 flat bed trucks.

Jim Kieffer, who was with

Circus Kirk for five years, tells of Boas's contracting ability: "Doc Boas was an artist when it came to planning a route. I know we would spend hours in the office going over potential towns and sponsors. We did use some professional agents from time to time and Doc would also go out and book. We would also have some

of the students book if they were off school. Some pros used were Russ Bryan and Alan Meredith who worked New England. Ron Bacon also took some western Pennsylvania and Ohio dates. Frank Felt booked many dates for several years."

Circus Kirk had forerunners in the field of youth circuses, but none was a touring show. The Wenatchee Youth Circus in Oregon operated as an open-air show, although Sarasota High School's Sailor Circus did work under canvas. Both had short runs over a few weeks, however, and usually performed in only one location. Florida State University had its Flying High Circus, found-



Dave Fulton and his band in 1971. Jim Kieffer collection.

ed by Jack Haskin, which did not travel. The annual Circus Festival in Peru, Indiana, encouraged the participation of youngsters from the town, but the Circus City Circus did not tour. As a result, most circus mavens felt that Kirk's success in 1969 could be attributed more to luck than skill and openly wondered if the show would reopen in 1970.

The second season began with an enlarged cast and a tour schedule from June 11 through September 4 that encompassed three states, adding Ohio and Maryland. Kirk played Columbus, Ohio on July 24-25, July 31-August 1, and August 5-7.

A flow chart of department heads showed the new organization: North American Operating Co., Inc. (Dr. Boas, owner) and the Lutheran Church in America (Rev. Jim Percy, 1970 pastor/liaison) were now the co-directors of Circus Kirk. Boas was manager of six departments (band, business, operations, midway, back yard, performance), each with its own head. Boas was also manager of operations, with Larry French as

Kirk lot scene in 1970. Jim Kieffer collection.





Circus Kirk lot scene in 1974. Pfening Archives.

as superintendent, who in turn was responsible for the seven other departments on the lot--the big top, the sideshow, the ring stock, props, electrical, the cookhouse and transportation. In addition, the Kirk front end carried two independent concessionaires, Len Knapp (the Reptilerama snake show) and Gene Earl (butcher). The work details, which relied on town boys acquired by local sponsors to supplement labor, had 14 kids assigned to the big top, four to the sideshow and two to the cookhouse.

A new 60 by 120 foot big top, bought from Dave Wharton, sat

Aerial view of Kirk in 1974. Pfening Archives.



about 1,000. The show moved on nine trucks and three trailers.

A Kirk herald used in 1973.

The final program and running order of the 1970 big top show was representative of all of its seasons: Overture, Fanfare, Opening Spec, Swinging Ladders, Magic Act, Clowns, Tumblers, Clowns, Still Trapeze, Clowns, Juggling, Animal Menage, Plate Spinning, Clown Band, Low Wire, Clown Walk-around, Animal Fantasy, Fire Juggling, Spanish Web, Clown Stop, Balance Beam, Trampoline, Ascent of Incline Cable, Finale Parade. A ten piece band provided music for the performance.

By the middle of the 1970 season, an unfortunate financial reality had

become obvious. The enormous setup costs for each season were constant whether the Kirk stayed out one week or 50 weeks. Certainly there were daily operating expenses such as salaries, gasoline and meals --in the 1970 season's nut was \$750 a day--which ended when the show closed; but many of the costs, such as insurance, vehicle registration, tent and prop purchases and office



Lisa the baby elephant. Bob Cline collection.

expenses were either ongoing or had annual fees. Since at that point the performers' salaries were minimal, \$50 per week, an extended season would go a long way toward amortizing those expenses.

Midseason, Doc Boas announced a postseason tour of one additional week. A revised running order for those cast members who did not have early university starts and could remain with the show included a clown baseball sketch, a coloring book pitch, the rolling globe, a solo tramp clown juggler, a single Spanish web, a comedy balance beam act and corporate sponsor announcements. This was the first of





several attempts the Kirk made over the years to try to generate additional revenue.

The 1971 season toured the same states with a cast of 40 in 73 towns. They gave 146 performances from June 7 through September 4. Finally, the Rev. Harris, so important in the creation of Kirk, was assigned show pastor by the LCA. At the end of the season, rather than continue the entire show for additional days, Boas decided to repackage just the Circus Kirk side show as a carnival ten-in-one.

From September 5-11 the Kirk side show played the Juniata County Fair in Port Royal, Pennsylvania, with four members of the Kirk cast, augmented with one new showgirl. Set up at one end of the fairgrounds, the sideshow was a ten-in-one in name only because it featured the same eight acts seen on the Kirk tour, magic, ventriloquism, Punch and Judy, human blockhead, a snake charmer, a fire eater, an escape artist and the sword box. The performance schedule was no longer the two a day the personnel were used to. The grind was constant, and a new bally was delivered whenever there were enough people to draw a tip. The experiment was not financially successful, and at week's end the tent was packed up in the rain for the barn.

A 1971 article in the *Sunday Sun Magazine* stated, "Circus Kirk is like no other circus in the world. Every performer is a high school or college student. The boss rigger is a Harvard man, the head electrician is preparing for the ministry. The fire-eater is working for a law degree and the girl

The full personnel in 1973. Jim Kieffer collection.

with the dog act is a Bryn Mawr English major."

Rain was a problem on Kirk--indeed, on any show. The first Circus Kirk route book, published in 1972 by business manager James Kieffer, who was later on the board of Circus World Museum, recorded that rain fell on the show for a quarter of its 86 days on the road, with 10 rain dates in its first 15 days alone.

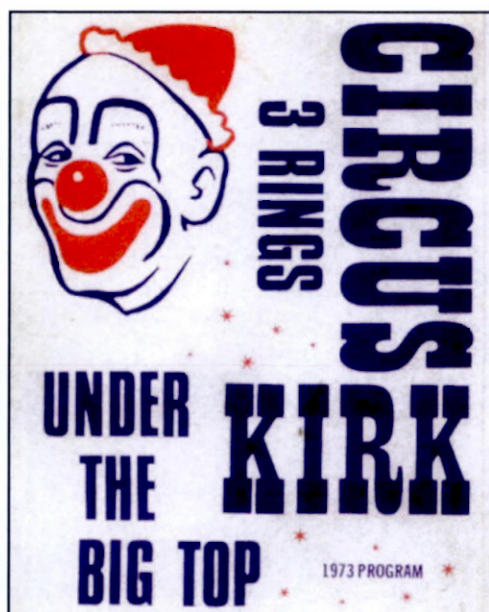
In the introduction of the 1972 route book Kieffer wrote, "Encouraged by the success of the 1971 tour, Dr. Charles Boas began early to plan for an even bigger and better circus in 1972. No longer was Circus Kirk only a token in the outdoor entertainment field, but rather a sizable operation involving nearly 50 personnel, over a dozen pieces of motorized rolling stock, and an investment of thousands of dollars and hours of labor. Despite a short season (73 days) the show was known far and wide, its fame spread by increased press and television coverage. Since its route consisted mainly of Pennsylvania, Maryland and Ohio, few circus buffs had had an opportunity to see for themselves what this student-operated circus was all about. Many had heard that it was sponsored by a church, that it had a ten-piece band, and that a sideshow complete with old-time canvas banners, a fire-eater, and magician was part of the total scheme of the show. Yet so much was left untold.

"The 1972 edition opened another chapter in the story about a college professor who owned a circus. Little did I know back in September of 1971 that I would become involved in this unusual adventure. The almost daily planning sessions with 'Doc,' trips to look at used semi trucks, bidding for band uniforms at a school auction, scouting out-of-print music to use in the show, lending an ear and offering suggestions, and planning the art work that

would go on the new equipment took hours of my time leading up to opening day. The pace quickened as the June 10 date approached. I became more excited every day as winter quarter's activity increased. The time finally arrived for me to hitch up my trailer to begin what was to be a most unusual three weeks on the road. 'Doc' later described these days as the worst he had ever experienced in show business."

Mort Gamble presented a paper at the Popular Culture-American Culture Association Conference in Toronto in March of 2002 which read in part; "In June 1972, rains spawned by Hurricane Agnes lashed Pennsylvania. The show fled rising waters, finding refuge at Elizabeth-

The cover of the 1973 Kirk program. Pfening Archives.



town College, and struggled through weeks of mechanical breakdowns, poor business, even destruction of its donniker (the bathroom trailer) in an accident. True to the Circus Kirk spirit, however, the crew built a new one and held a private pageant featuring a donniker king and queen to welcome the rolling outhouse. The creator, the show's father figure who himself had been caught up in the chaos of the 172 tour, battling forces that stretched to the limit even his extensive experience and wisdom--Doc won the honor of christening the new facility."

David Fulton was bandmaster with ten musicians. Tom Ogden was sideshow manager. Chet Lee was concession manager. Sue Montague was animal superintendent. Bruce Anderson was boss canvas man.

The performance include aerial ladders, acrobats and tumblers, clowns, dogs, aerial cradle, illusions, trampoline, dressage horse, low wire, juggling, straightjacket escape, aerial perch, llamas, Spanish web and incline wire. The show moved on eleven trucks, including four semis and six trailers.

The route book included a day-by-day diary. Entries included: "The show opened in York, Pennsylvania June 9-10. Hanover, Pennsylvania was played June 11 and 12. The sponsor gave the show a 3/4 and a full house.

"In Gettysburg on June 13 it rained on and off all day. The concession wagon and office trailer came off their hitches going over a bump coming off the lot in Hanover, causing some delay in their arrival in Gettysburg. The

advance was poor so several sections of the seats were left on the truck. Two trucks had to be towed off the lot.

"Chambersburg on June 15 was a bummer. Poor advance sales produced only 125 people who showed up for the matinee and there were less at night. New pit show banners and the sideshow header

arrived to complete the most colorful midway on the road. Rain during the evening show forced cancellation of spec and finale.

"In fact, 1972 was memorable for the Kirk, as it was for all shows touring the northeastern United States that summer, as the year of Hurricane Agnes. Circus Kirk had endured wind and rain storms before, and the crew had all been taught to guy out the tents in the case of a mid show John Robinson. All of the veterans remembered the sideshow tent blow down of July 4th the previous year, but no one was prepared for the fury of Hurricane Agnes.

"Rain began to fall on the show at suppertime on June 20 in Hershey, Pennsylvania, and continued throughout the evening. The next morning Kirk made a short jump to Elizabethtown and, after a lot change, set up on a school athletic field in a valley. Rain poured throughout the day; but sellout crowds defied the storm, providing two straw houses. By tear down, a nearby creek had overflowed its banks; the water drained down onto the field, adding to the unrelenting downpour. When the tops were dropped that evening, the canvas sank completely beneath almost a foot of water.

"June 21 and 22, Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania. A one day stand turned into two as rains continued. The 21st started with a dispute over the lot, but the matter was settled in short order causing only a slight

The side show bannerline in 1974. Pfening Archives.

delay in setting up. The crowds defied the storm and provided us with almost two full houses. Trucks were towed from the lot in a process that took several hours. By the morning of the 22th the creek had run over its banks. And everyone rose to the cry of 'flood.' Swirling waters surrounded the office trailer on the bridge above the creek. The rains continued for rest of the day causing the worst floods since 1936. Elizabethtown College graciously made available food service and recreation to our stranded circus.

"June 28, Hellertown, Pennsylvania. Good luck ran out on us today. The new prop truck blew its engine, the brakes on the sideshow truck went out, and a bag of important rigging was found missing from the big top truck as set up was about to begin. The results: the sideshow arrived at 1:30 p.m., two rings were used in the big top and props were destined to ride in the sleepers. A thorough search of yesterday's Hellertown lot failed to turn up the rigging. Our conclusion was that the rigging had been stolen during the night off the truck in Hellertown.

"July 1, Darby, Pennsylvania. This was a banner day for the show--the best in its history. However, the people on the grounds caused problems. Certainly one did not want to travel streets alone after dark.

"July 3 in Bel Air, Maryland was a real wash out. Thunderstorms, no sponsor, the demolition of the donniker and a late arrival caused cancellation of the show.

"August 5 and 6, Midland, Pennsylvania. Another bad day for the side show department. A drunk driver hit their truck, which was being returned to the show after repairs. The truck was finally sent back to the seller for good. The sideshow finally got on at 6:50 p.m. aboard another U-Haul and was up in time to handle a good crowd at night.

"August 18-19, Wellsboro, Pennsylvania. Circus Kirk providing the entire midway for the Tioga County Youth



Fair after the scheduled carnival was unable to play the date. Special front-end attractions were quickly devised in order to make the most of the opportunity presenting itself here.

"September 2, Douglasville, Pennsylvania. Lot problems on this our last date. A small school playground was finally secured. This was a flood make-up booked last winter. We ended the season as we began, in the rain.

"September 3, East Berlin, Pennsylvania. The run into quarters was accomplished with only three truck breakdowns including one of the semi-tractors, which had performed so faithfully all season long. An evening banquet, with entertainment provided by various members of the show, highlighted the closing day of a very interesting and unusual tour."

Years later, Doc reminisced that his real concern that night was not for the equipment. The fact that lights, provided by the Kirk's own generator, had to remain on throughout tear down meant that there was a real, though unvoiced, danger of electrocution at all times.

Despite this hardship, things had improved in several important areas in 1972. Virginia was added to its June 9-September 3 tour, for a total season distance of 2,835 miles. The cast and crew neared 50, including a full-time nurse, an 11-piece band, seven sideshow performers and an eight-member clown alley. The buses were retired and, for the first time, the seventeen truck fleet included four tractor-trailer semis, two of which became sleepers. The show had grown to boast a bale ring big top with a 60-foot round and three 30-foot middles and a 30-by-70 push pole sideshow top.

The biggest change, however, was the break from the Lutheran Church in America. As late as January 1972, discussions were held to move the show's jurisdiction from the Central Pennsylvania Synod to the Commission on Youth Activities of the LCA through its Philadelphia

office. Negotiations failed to reach an agreement, and when the church loan was recalled, Kirk opened its 1972 season without religious affiliation.

The Kirk show had become increasingly secular each year, having long abandoned "morality" clown sketches and the like, but now even the finale banner parade was dropped in favor of a "Salute to Our Country" with the cast brandishing red, white and blue flags as a giant American flag was unfurled over the center ring. Although still a Sunday School show according to circus jargon, Circus Kirk was no longer literally a "church show." Dr. Charles W. Boas finally had fulfilled his dream; in spite of its student-age performers, Circus Kirk was a professional show.

Circus Kirk opened its 1973 doors on May 20 in Hunterstown, Pennsylvania. Only a matinee was given on the muddy lot. Local trucks were hired to get the show off out of the muck.

The performance included juggling; low wire, Bob Cline; ladders; aerial carousel; manege horse; trick pony; magic; high bar; unicycle; llamas; dog act; trampoline; Spanish web; single traps; tumbling; magic act and incline wire. David Fulton was bandmaster, leading fourteen musicians.

Tom Ogden was side show manag-

The side show bannerline in 1972. Jim Kieffer collection.

er in 1973. The attractions were Ogden, magic and blockhead; Craig Carlson, vent; Bruce Bowers, escape; Michael Straka, fire eater and torture king; and Vickie Dubin, sword box.

Mort Gamble joined Kirk in 1973 as a seat butcher

Jim Kieffer published another route book in 1973. Day-to-day reports included: "The first two-day stand of the season was in Columbia, Maryland, May 26-27. The sponsor, the 4th of July Committee came through with a 3/4 matinee and 1/2 house at night on the 26th. Both performances on the 27th were well attended.

"June 3, Kensington, Maryland. In many respects this turned out to be one of the most memorable days in Circus Kirk history. The matinee was a straw house with butchers barely able to get inside the big top. Irvin Feld and son Kenneth attended part of the afternoon show. Members of the sponsoring 'Tent Troupe' helped in concessions. Because of the crowd the guests had to stand in the entrance to watch the show. Jim Kieffer left to return to York to assume additional responsibilities as show business manager.

"June 12, Spring City, Pennsylvania. Sideshow and big top arrived late this morning. Evening attendance was good after a light matinee. A storm blew up as the night show concluded and the lot was soon flooded. Teardown of the front end was further held up as one of the monkeys escaped in the front end truck.



"July 12, Reno, Pennsylvania. The show was greeted on arrival by Beatty-Cole 'wait' paper. This tickled every one, as it appeared the circus world was sitting up and taking notice of Circus Kirk.

"July 17, Jefferson, Ohio. Jack Mills was on the lot. Show officials visited the Mills winter quarters graveyard and bought poles, stakes and wardrobe.

"August 12. Apollo, Pennsylvania. A matinee only provided good business. Bob Cline joined the concession department here.

"After 15 full weeks the show closed on September 2-3 in East Berlin, Pennsylvania. Upon arrival a Welcome Home Circus Kirk banner strung across the main street greeted the show."

Dates in Delaware and West Virginia were added to the route, and a new 40-foot middle replaced a center section of the big top. With Doc Boas's time increasingly being taken up with routine business issues, Stu Levens, the big top boss from the first Kirk season, was brought in as general superintendent. More and more, despite the age of its performers, Kirk became accepted in the circus world as a "real" circus.

The show had 42 teenagers in 1973. It moved on nine trucks including six semis, three less than in 1972. The tractors were leased. The big top was a 60 with a 40 and two 30-foot middles. The sideshow top was 30 x 70 feet. The cook-house tent was 20 x 30 feet.

Following the 1973 tour, Boas once again attempted to extend the season. He reframed the top as a one-ringer and sent it on a southern tour as Boas Bros. Circus--resurrecting the old name. Traveling with a cast and crew of 19, the show toured from September 7 until October 27, going as far south as Lillington, North Carolina. The tour was not financial-



Circus Kirk lot scene. Bob Cline collection.

ly successful, and Kirk did not attempt another southern tour, again until its final season in 1977.

By 1974 Circus Kirk was billing itself as "The All American All-Student Show," touring six states and giving over 180 performances from May 25 through Labor Day. For the first time, the route was expanded into New Jersey and southern New England.

The show gave personnel a paper entitled "'Information for Employees.'" It read in part, "Circus Kirk exists for many reasons. Certainly not the least important is to provide a meaningful summer experience for those involved. The rewards are not meant to be solely monetary--indeed, they are principally of a human nature--the joy of performing, the accomplishment of hard, long work well done, the opportunity to gain new skills and to improve old

Unloading the big top canvas from canvas truck in 1974. Jim Kieffer collection.



ones, the chance to travel and to gain new friendships, the chance to share with others.

"For some Circus Kirk is a stepping stone to work with other circuses. Over a dozen Kirkers have remained in the circus profession following their stay with the Kirk.

"Most important is the idea that young people can produce and operate a complete tented circus and that they will accomplish something of worth is a trait inherent in many youth. The thing of worth involved is the happiness the circus brings to people of all ages. The work is hard, often times nearly impossible, but the response of applause and laughter is effective in dealing with what seems at times to be insurmountable odds.

"In order for Circus Kirk to continue it is necessary to operate in a manner which is conducive to generating revenue. This revenue is necessary to pay salaries, meet daily operating expenses and to fund operations during the nine months of the year when the circus is not touring. For this reason sound management and business practices must be used. The information which follows has been compiled to acquaint you with some of the things which are important to the daily operation of the circus.

"Leadership positions with Circus Kirk accrue to individuals based on experience and potential. These positions include: big top boss, property boss, office manager, bandmaster, side show manager, concession manager, front end superintendent, front end canvas boss, producing clown, animal superintendent and electrician. These people are responsible to the General Manager for the day-to-day operations of the circus.,

"As a rule personnel are assigned two jobs. One job involves the set-up and

tear-down of the circus. The other involves some aspect of the performance. Up and down jobs may be with big top canvas, sideshow canvas, the gilly gang, concession department, electrical department or animal department.

"Payday is every Monday. The first payday is two weeks after the start of the tour except for personnel hired for winter quarters work and notified in writing of such work.

"An additional stipend is paid for extra performances in excess of two on any day.

"A health form completed by a doctor is required of all personnel. These forms are sent to all employees prior to the start of the tour.

"Insurance protection is provided by the circus for work related accidents only. Employees should provide a copy of their family Blue Cross or other insurance coverage for non-work related health problems.

"The safety of personnel and the public is of utmost concern to the circus. Hardhats, provided by the show, are required by all persons involved with the set-up and teardown of the circus. Steel-toed shoes are required for riggers and prop men.

"Except as arranged with individual personnel, the circus provides all wardrobe and equipment necessary to perform various acts. A pad tent is used for dressing purposes and disbursing of wardrobe. No show owned wardrobe is to be kept in the sleepers.

"The dining department serves or arranges for three meals each day except on days when the show is en route. Personnel should notify the cookhouse personnel 24 hours in advance of any plans to miss a meal. Meals are served when the "Hotel" flag is up only. No food or dishes may be taken from the cookhouse without permission. Shirts are required at all meals and hats must be removed."

Frank Felt started booking the show in 1974 and continued until 1977.

In 1975 the Central Pennsylvania

Synod of the LCA reestablished ties with Circus Kirk, assigning a chaplain to its "summer youth project." By then, the new tone of Kirk was set; the show's program did not allow for parable sketches or parades of banners proclaiming universal brotherhood.

Frank Felt reported on the show in a 1975 *White Tops* article, "The 1975 edition of Circus Kirk rolled out of its East Berlin, Pennsylvania quarters on May 24, with the strongest performance in its eight year history with a much improved truck fleet. This year, the animal offerings were greatly enlarged with the addition of Kirk's first elephant." Three and one half year old Lisa was leased from the Miller Equipment Co. of Hugo, Oklahoma. Lisa later went on to fame and fortune with Roberts Bros. Circus.

The performance included juggling, swinging ladders, a cradle act, clowns, a pony act, unicycles, low-wire act, a dog act, Roman ladders,

a cast member dressed as Mr. Peanut and doing an act with Lisa, the elephant, and meeting the audience on the midway. Planters paid \$3,500 at beginning of the season to help the show get on the road. Another \$2,500 in midseason helped us to keep going and a final payment of \$3,500 at the end of the season got the show through the off season."

The midway included a grab-joint trailer, a white ticket wagon, a small menagerie and petting zoo, and a ten banner bannerline fronted the side show.

The truck fleet was enlarged with a new canvas loader carrying the big top and sideshow tents. It was a converted school bus cut off behind the driver's seat. It was not a typical spool, but a roller was mounted at the end of the flat bed and the canvas was then folded manually. A small mechanical truck was used to carry the big top center poles. Twelve vehicles moved the circus. All the trucks had new paint jobs.

The big top was a push-pole 60 with two 30s and one 40 middle. Seating was eight-high blues all around with a capacity of about 1,500. There was a center ring with red and yellow curbs and two stages.

The petting zoo was housed in a green and white 20 x 40-foot top that was new in 1975. Rounding out the canvas was a 30 x 20-foot dressing top and a 20 x 30-foot cookhouse tent.

Felt commented in the *White Tops*, "Although business for Circus Kirk in 1975 was off from the record 1974 take, especially in Northwestern New England, where most shows found the going rough, a full season was completed without a performance being missed.

"The season saw the first blow down in the show's eight-year history. During the stand at Oxford, Maine on July 31, a heavy gust of wind hit the circus between performances while most of the personnel were at dinner. A few hands happened to be in the big top at the time, two of them sustained minor



The Kirk cookhouse and trailer. Bob Cline collection.

an illusionist, a llama act, web number, single-trap act, acrobats and tumblers, inclined wire act and the performing elephant.

Press agent Larry Cinino traveled to New York looking for a national sponsor. An advertising promotion with the Planters Peanut Company resulted. Frank Felt noted: "It was a dream come true. The show had never been a big money maker and for the later years it survived on the advertising deal with Planters Peanuts. The advertising consisted of

injuries, but they were back on the show later the same day.

"The evening performance was side walled, and the top was repaired and back in service and back in the air the following day. Another blow to the show occurred with some four weeks left in the season when owner Dr. Charles Boas was temporarily forced off the road because of ill health. It is a credit to the young staffers and a loyal and well trained company that the show arrived back at its East Berlin, Pennsylvania quarters on September 4 without a serious mishap, a missed performance or even a late matinee.

"Doc Boas was back on the lot at the final stand in East Berlin and hosted a party for all show personnel. After thanking them for a job well done, he promised that he would have a bigger and better edition of Circus Kirk on the road in 1976."

By 1976, for the Bicentennial Edition of Circus Kirk, the LCA was no longer affiliated with the show. The show made history when it became the first tented circus to play on Martha's Vineyard. The entire convoy of trucks and equipment was ferried across to the island off the coast of Massachusetts to an enthusiastic response by the summer residents. In 1976 Felt was appointed assistant manager. His wife worked on the front door and his daughter presented the dog and the llama acts.

During much of 1976 and all of 1977 Boas was unable to tour with the Kirk for medical reasons. Felt was home office manager. Mike Straka was road manager in 1976. He had joined the show in 1973 as a fire eater in the sideshow. Straka did not return for the 1977 season.

The show's financial woes, aggravated by its short season, escalated. The 1976 season opened in Wheaton, Pennsylvania on May 22 with only two hundred people in the afternoon audience and three hundred at night. The matinee started at 3:35.

Groveton-Alexandria, Pennsylvania was played on May 24. The matinee started at 4:15 and drew 250. Six hundred attended the evening performance.

On May 25 Kirk was in Annandale, Pennsylvania. Two hundred attended the matinee that started at 4:35. Four hundred turned out at night.

Dale City, Pennsylvania was shown on May 27. The matinee started at 4:30 and drew 250 with 550 on hand in the evening.



Sleeper semi in front of the big top in 1975. Frank Felt photo.

On May 28 the show moved into Virginia at Arlington. The lot was enclosed by a fence that had to be ripped down to get into, delaying set up by a couple of hours. Three hundred people showed up in afternoon and four hundred at night.

The show finally had a red one when the PTA-PTO sponsored two days in Reston, Virginia, May 29-30. Three performances were given attracting 8,030 circus fans.

During season Kirk ventured into New England. The show was in White River Junction, Vermont on July 6 and Keene, New Hampshire on July 10. Two dozen stands were played in Massachusetts in July and August. The season ended with a three-day stand in Hershey, Pennsylvania, September 4-6.

The Planters Peanut deal ended in 1976, a real setback for the show financially.

In 1977 Boas tried to cut expenses by going to a single ring. The new big top went from a 60 with two 30s and one 40 to a single 40 foot middle.

The 1977 season opened on May 21 in New Oxford, Pennsylvania. The show again played New England starting in Great Barrington, Massachusetts on June 28. Rhode Island, New Hampshire and Vermont were played in July.

Kirk was back in East Berlin, Pennsylvania on September 5.

Felt noted: "We got through the

ninety day regular summer tour but had no funds to get the show through the winter and open the next summer. Doc said he would take the show south for a fall 'gold' tour. We had no route booked so dates were set where possible with very short notice. I stayed back at the office in East Berlin and Doc took the show south. Post Labor Day tours are not the best time for any show and Kirk only went deeper into the red."

Boas returned home due to his chronic health problems. Felt was office manager. Jim Judkins was road manager during the fall southern tour. David Mobbs quickly booked the dates after Labor Day.

Taneytown, Maryland was played September 6. The show went into Virginia at Winchester on September 13 and stayed there until October 8 when it entered North Carolina at Madison. Then twelve towns in South Carolina were shown.

This extension had a two-fold purpose: The primary objective was, of course, to close the show in the black with enough capital to continue operations into 1978. The "inside" word was that, because of Doc's health and the continuing money problems, Circus Kirk was on its last tour. The closer the Kirk got to Florida--the home for many in the circus industry--the more likely it would be to find a potential buyer.

The daily expenses were about \$3,500. Gas prices were high, about fifty people were on the payroll and there were payments on some of the canvas and semi-trailers.

Kirk played Raeford, North Carolina on October 22. Seven hundred twenty-six tickets were sold. Total income including sideshow and concessions was \$1,552.31. Dunn, North Carolina was played on October 23 to only 150 people.

Gaffney, South Carolina was played on November 1. Attendance was 165. Total income for the day was \$682.47. Business picked up in Union, South Carolina on November 2. Attendance was 408 and the total income for the day was \$1,151.08. On November 14 Kirk played Statesboro, Georgia. Attendance was



Doc Boas making side show opening. Carl Uehling photo.

83 people. Income for the day was a pitiful \$430.24. Warner Robbins, Georgia was played on November 18-20. Fifty tickets were sold on the 18th, 191 on the 19th, and 191 on the 20th. Moultrie, Georgia was played on November 22-23. Attendance for three shows was 474, total income for two days was \$1,694.29.

Multiple day stands were played in Cairo and Bainbridge, Georgia and Lake City, Florida.

Circus Kirk closed with a three day stand in Ocala, Florida, December 2-4. No dates had been booked beyond Ocala. Elephant man Barry Sloan drove Lisa from Florida to Hugo, Oklahoma. Judkins drove Sloan's car back to Pennsylvania with the show.

The stands going south were a disaster. Judkins recalled: "We did not pay anyone, just gave them 'allowances' when we got a few bucks. We had fun and learned a great deal. We sort of faced reality and most of the kids/workers wanted to go home



A 1975 bill posting. Jim Kieffer collection.

for Christmas."

The equipment was brought back to quarters in East Berlin. Shortly thereafter, the North American Operating Company, the parent corporation of Circus Kirk, filed for bankruptcy with \$21,000 in assets and \$100,000 in debts.

Incredibly, Doc Boas tried again in 1978, taking the show out for three weeks. The student format was abandoned. That was the end of Circus Kirk.

In the spring of 1978 The Royal Shows, Inc., George Hicks, president bought the Kirk equipment for \$42,000. Hicks was from Dunn, North Carolina. His partner and general manager was Jim Hand. Using the Hix Bros. Circus title the show opened May 23-13. Hix Bros closed after 23 days in Rocky Mount, North Carolina. The legendary Mack MacDonald had two elephants on the

A 1978 Hix Bros. Circus poster. John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Tibbals Digital collection.



show and the Flores family provided most of the rest of the performance.

When the new owner went bust and did not pay the performers the equipment was turned over to them in place of salary. The Victor Flores family ended up with the show.

The legacy of Circus Kirk continues, however, as over 24 of the 500 veterans of the show went on--at least for some time--to professional circus or other performance careers. The last Kirk big top was still in use as late as the summer of 1989, when it was destroyed in a blow down in Texas.

In September 1989 a reunion of Circus Kirk alumni met in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, close to the show's original home. Dr. Charles W. Boas was honored there for his contributions to the American circus by the Circus Fans Association of America as well as by the State House of Representatives which declared Labor Day 1989 as "Dr. Boas Day." The Governor of Pennsylvania and the President of the United States sent letters of congratulations.

Doc Boas died at age 76 on November 12, 2002.

Jim Kieffer, Jim Judkins, Bob Cline, Tom Ogden, Don Brewer, Frank Felt and Mort Gamble, all of whom were with Circus Kirk, provided extensive information for this article. Other information came from the Circus World Museum and John Polacek.

William E. "Bud" Gorman and Polly Lee, Riders

By John Daniel Draper

Henry Charles Lee (1814-1885) first came to the United States from England in 1836 and, after returning to England, came over again in 1848. With his two brothers, Lavater and Hercules, his sons, Francis and Eugene, and his wife Margaret, he was an acrobatic artist of high caliber. In 1849 they performed at Philadelphia's Walnut Street Theater with Rufus Welch and in January 1850 at Barnum's American Museum

An 1892 Sells Bros. poster featuring Polly Lee. John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Tibbals Digital collection.

in New York.¹

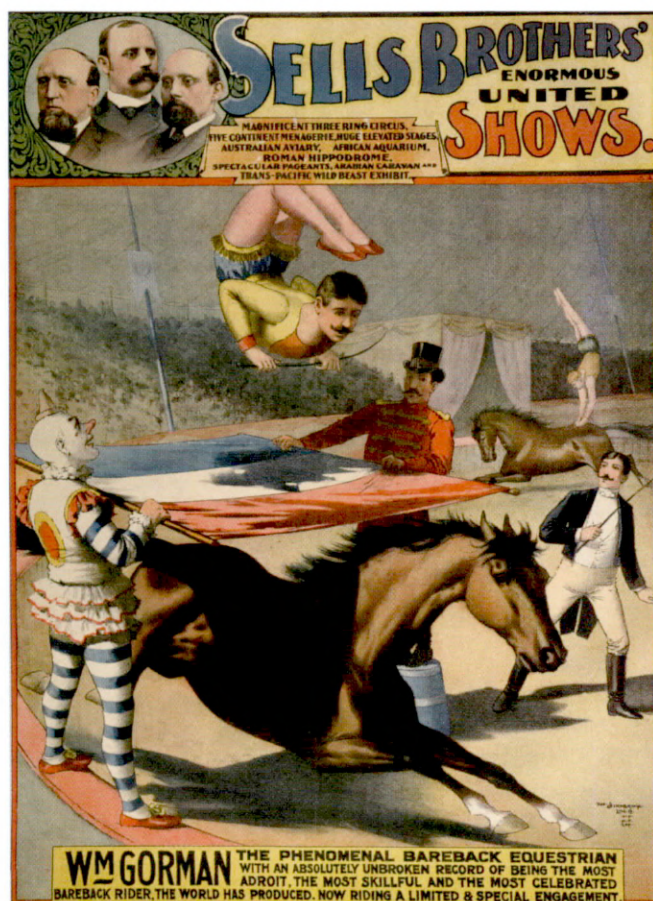
That August he was with Dan Rice in Brooklyn and in October with Welch's New Broadway Circus at the Alhambra. When Welch's troupe went to the Carribean Henry broke with his brothers and remained with Welch. He eventually told the manager of the company that he was going to California. Knowing of the gold discovery at Sutter's mill, he decided to take his family across disease-infested Panama and on October 2, 1851 they took passage north on the steamer *Constitution*.

Arriving in San Francisco in late October, he immediately took out a

touring company known as the National Circus. Later under canvas, the show was called the Olympic Circus. In the next year his wagon show played many mining towns in the Stockton, Sacramento and San Francisco area such as Coloma, Georgetown, Auburn, Todd's Valley, Michigan Bluff, Dutch Flat, Grass Valley, Chinese Camp, Columbia, Sonora, Jamestown and Mariposa.

Late in 1852 on the way to

An 1893 Sells Bros. poster featuring Bud Gorman. John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Tibbals Digital collection.





An Adam Forepaugh 1879 poster featuring Pauline Lee. John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Tibbals Digital collection.

Coloma, the wagon carrying his wife Margaret, and the baby Theodore over turned on a mountain road. The baby was killed and Margaret soon after died of her injuries.

Henry continued performing,

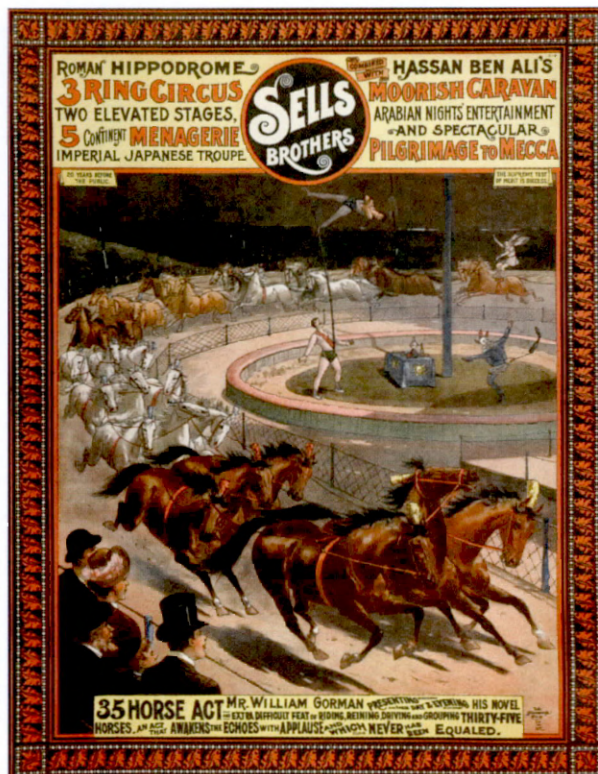
Polly Lee around 1890. Pfening Archives.



sometimes under canvas and sometimes in theaters, some of his own construction. In 1855 his circus was known as Lee and Marshall's National Circus and Hippodrome. He took the show to the Sandwich Islands. In August of 1856 he married Jeannette Annereau, a young equesrienne on his show. In 1857 he reorganized as Lee and Bennett's North American Circus, which was in competition with Rowe's Pioneer Circus. It was at this time that his daughter, Pauline (Polly) Lee, was born.

In 1860 Henry went down along the coast by side wheeler boat to the Los Angeles area. George Ryland had joined the troupe by this time. Little Polly, then three, was quite alert and darted about taking in everything. The troupe continued down the coast of Mexico to Acapulco and then to Lima, Peru and Valparaiso, Chile, where his son Lavater was born.

Back in San Francisco in 1865, Lee and George Ryland combined their acts and played the mining camps and then headed north to Victoria,



An 1893 Sells Bros. poster featuring Bud Gorman. John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Tibbals Digital collection.

British Columbia.

Jeannette with her three week old

Polly Lee around 1889. Pfening Archives.



baby Tom stayed on in California. Then on August 28, in order to join her husband, she booked passage north with her baby on the *Brother Jonathan*. Opposite Crescent City their boat ran into a storm and in heading toward the shore it struck a reef and sank. The bodies of Jeanette and Tom were never found.

Lee's show, now called the Cosmopolitan Circus, continued north. On February 11, 1867, back in California, Henry Lee married Carrie Weinshank, his third wife.

At age ten, Polly was taught to do the back somersault. Henry would crack the whip in stern fashion if she tended to balk. He was a hard task master and perfectionist, but used the whip only to get her attention. She would repeat the same stunt time and again in order to build up her muscles. Polly rode around the ring balancing on a new horse, named Mazeppa. She could put her weight on one leg and extend the other to the side. Henry would proclaim that Polly was one of a very few performers who was able to stand erect on a horse and do what she was doing without the use of a pad.

In 1873 at the age of sixteen, Polly was the star of her father's circus as a principal bareback rider, a juggler on horseback and a driver of a two horse tandem cart act. Henry was reminded of Polly's mother when she rode bareback on a beautiful white horse. Rose, the younger sister, juggled torches as she rode around the ring. She also performed with two horses and in a tandem cart act.

That year Henry sold out and became manager for George De Haven whose show traveled on rails. His children, Harry, Lavater and Rosa, were also on the program. In these early years Polly Lee appeared on such circuses as Lee and Ryland (1866), the Crescent City Circus (1870), J. Hudson Gray's North and South American Circus in the West Indies (1872) and Howes & Cushing (1875).

William E. (Bud) Gorman (June 18, 1852-February 11, 1940) and his sister Laura were the children of William Gorman of Selma, Alabama. The senior Gorman was a portrait painter. Their mother died when they



William E. (Bud) Gorman around 1910. Pfening Archives.

were very young and they went to live with relatives.²

Laura Gorman married the great rider James Robinson who introduced Bud to the circus business. The 18 year old Gorman was fascinated by the world of the circus and was launched into his career as a champion male hurdle rider. In 1870 on the Robinson and Pastor Circus, Bud was taught to tumble on the back of a horse. He continued on that show through 1872 as he perfected his skills and in that year he began bareback riding. In 1873

Lavater Lee, Polly Lee's brother. Circus World Museum collection.



and 1874 he continued in this capacity on the Great Chicago Circus and in the fall of 1874 on the Great Eastern Menagerie Consolidated with Robinson's Champion Circus.

By January of 1875 at San Francisco he was on Jackley's Vienna Circus for four weeks as a hurdle rider. On March 20th he was a bareback rider, juggler and hurdle equestrian at John Wilson's Palace Amphitheater at San Francisco. Later that year, he performed on the Montgomery Queen Circus in an English bareback jockey hurdle act and purchased the educated horse Garibaldi from Joseph Chiarini.³

In 1876 Polly Lee and Bud Gorman were both on Cooper, Bailey & Co. Great International Allied Shows. She was a dashing bareback equestrienne, her act clowning by the grotesque Charles Seeley, and Bud did his bounding jockey act, and served as ticket taker for the concert. They were both on the Cooper & Bailey tour of Australia⁴ in 1876 and 1877. The 1877 program included:⁵

Display #4: Miss Lee--principal trick act. Display #10: Bud Gorman--bounding hurdle rider. Display #14: Polly Lee--equestrian juggling. Display #17: James Robinson--champion rider of the world-leaping barriers, throwing somersaults, turning pirouettes, carrying son, Eugene, upright on his head.

In 1878 the Lees, except for Polly, worked for the Campbell Circus and later for Joseph Chiarini's Royal Italian Circus on its South American tour. Polly was on the Great London Show where she was an elegant and graceful principal rider and juggling specialist.⁶ Bud Gorman, James Robinson, and Elise Dockrill were also on the show. Dockrill was billed as the only woman who could ride four horses at once. She was also a hurdle rider. Gorman was billed as the wizard horseman and hurricane hurdle and jockey rider.

In 1879 Polly performed her horseback juggling routine on the Adam Forepaugh Circus. On October 23, 1879 the Lee Family left San Francisco for Australia on the *City of New York* with Chiarini's Circus. Carrie, with Rosa, little Frank and baby Edna, went to Adelaide to stay

with Henry Lee's sister and brother in law, Henry Burton, at their country estate as the circus toured Australia. Burton had trained as a ringmaster under Charles Cooke in England.

The circus next went to Madras, India. Carrie and the children were now with the show. Polly and her husband, August, a clown, were also on the tour. He kept everyone laughing, even the Maharajah. As a climax Lavater leaped over 14 horses side by side from an inclined board, executed two somersaults in mid-air and landed on the pad beyond.

The circus proceeded to Rangoon, British Burma, where Carrie died of the bubonic plague. She was just 31 years of age. After this tragedy, the family broke up.⁷

Lavater, Harry, Rosa and Robert stayed there with other troupes. Frank and Edna were placed in the George Street orphanage in Parramatta, New South Wales. Chiarini returned to America. Polly and August returned to the United States where Polly could have her baby.

Henry returned to Australia to join his brother in law. He eventually died in Sydney on September 17, 1885 from the effects of a gunshot wound while hunting. He was 71 years of age. From his three marriages, Henry had a total of 16 children, many of whom died in infancy or early childhood.⁸

When Polly learned of Henry's death she returned to California to settle his estate. She found that he had lost everything except the old horse Mazeppa, which she reclaimed and put through his paces as in the old days. Earlier, August left her after the birth of their baby. He had never wanted the responsibility of a family so he just wandered off. Daughter Paula died at the age of six months and Polly obtained a divorce.⁹

In the spring of 1881 Polly and Gorman joined Sells Bros. Circus. She was billed as the original and only female bareback juggler in the world and he as the champion male hurricane hurdle rider of the world. Also on that program were James Robinson with his adopted son Clarence, and Willie Sells, the boy rider in his four horse act. Bud

Gorman had been on Sells Bros. the year previous and on the Adam Forepaugh Circus in 1879. In November of 1881 both Gorman and Polly were practicing at the West End Academy in Jersey City, New Jersey, along with Sebastian Quagliani and his son Louie, Elena and Linda Jeal, and Romeo Sebastian. The next month they both appeared on W. O'Dale Stevens's Great Australian Circus and T. F. Kelly's Specialty Troupe at the National Theatre in Philadelphia in their usual roles. Linda Jeal and Gorman were the originators of the "greatest sensational act ever performed in one ring. A good act

to copy. Double hurdle act never before attempted but now successfully performed by the originals." Linda Jeal also did her sensational "Flame Act."¹⁰

In February of 1883 a joint ad for Polly Lee and Bud Gorman listed them at liberty for the coming tenting season. In April, Bud was appearing as the champion hurdle rider on Sherman's Educated Horses and Hinman's Great European Circus and Pauline was the "crowned Princess of the Arena." On September 26, 1883 Pauline and Bud were married.¹¹

They joined S. H. Barrett & Co. on May 19, 1884. That show appeared under a 120' round top tent plus two 50' middle sections. There were a number of performers of note that year: Daisy Belmont, principal act and globe performer; Charles Ewers, jockey act and Pete Jenkins act; Robert Stickney, principal act; and Emma Lake, manege. R. H. Dockrill was equestrian manager. In addition, Elise Dockrill and W. Fred Aymar and his wife were on the bill.¹² Also, Sells Bros. route book and other advertising for 1884 listed Polly and Gorman as performers on that circus. In addition to being one of five hurdle riders, Bud also served as a main entrance ticket taker. Polly was a juggling equestrian and a principal rider, along with Adelaide Cordona. James Robinson, Bud's mentor, was also on that show.¹³

Early in 1885 Bud advertised three bareback horses, thoroughly broken, for sale. His address then was given as c/o James Robinson, Baden, North St. Louis, Missouri. That year Sells Bros. was a 45 car show with 12 camels, 253 horses and 10 elephants. The riders, in addition to Polly and Bud, were Adelaide Cordona, Frank and Mildred Gardner, Aida Purvis, Mlle Minnetta, Allie Jackson, Millie Mareta, Jerry Bell and Willie Sells. Fred Leslie was the equestrian director. Col. Charles Seeley and Bud Gorman were the ticket sellers. James Robinson was the equestrian director of S. H. Barrett's United Railroad Shows for 1885.¹⁴



Bud Gorman, equestrian director on Hagenbeck-Wallace in 1915. Circus World Museum collection.

By March 13, 1886 Gorman and Polly Lee had begun practicing at the Sells Bros. quarters in Columbus, Ohio. When the show arrived at Central Park in San Francisco their acts were: Display #7: Principal bareback--Polly Lee with clown, Johnny Purvis. Display #12: Equestrian juggling--Polly Lee. Display #17: Dashing hurdle riding: Bud Gorman. Display #22: 4 horse riding and driving--Willie Sells and Bud Gorman.¹⁵

They were back on Sells in 1887.

The year 1888 found them listed in Miller and Freeman's route book doing the following acts:

Display #5: Whirlwind hurdle--"Iron Horse Gallop"--Bud Gorman.

Display #8: Principal bareback act--quadrille--"Vivre l'annee"--Polly Lee. Display #13: Act du Manege--selections from "Erminie"--Polly Lee. Display #16: Four horse act--"Devil's Slide Gallop"--Bud Gorman.

Wallace & Co.'s route book for 1888 listed Bud Gorman as hurricane hurdle and four horse rider.

Great Wallace in 1889 billed Polly Lee as the equestrienne hit of the show. Bud Gorman, Charles Ewers and James Bell won applause in clever hurdle and jockey acts.¹⁶

Bud Gorman did a 29 horse tandem act on Walter L. Main in 1890.¹⁷ In that same year Addie Forepaugh was doing a forty horse tandem act (two abreast) on the hippodrome track on the Adam Forepaugh Circus. In November of that year Bud and Polly were in Mexico with Orrin Bros. Circus.¹⁸ Frank Melville, his wife and son were also there.

Returning in early 1891 to the states, Polly and Bud were again on Sells Bros. Gorman presented "day and evening his novel extra difficult feat of riding, reining, driving and grouping 35 horses, an act that awakens and echoes with applause and which has never been equaled."

Polly was also honored with a lithographic representation in 1891. A description of her performance at San Francisco reveals the daring and grace of her presentations: "A quick vault and she was on the horse's back. Away went the horse and she on him. First on one foot, then on the other, she balanced. When the horse approached the hurdle she dropped on one knee, letting the other pink clad limb slide down the horse's side. One hoof touched the top rail and made a great clatter, but the horse never lost his gait and the rider kept her position. The shock of alighting did not budge her an inch. Then came the balloon act. A sylph launched herself full into a paper covered hoop and landed exactly where she wanted to be."

Gorman's arm was broken after being kicked by a horse in April of that year while practicing at winter quarters. In addition to performing in 1891, he was also a door tender.

That fall Gorman and his wife, with William Showles, Daisy Belmont and William Dutton and wife, embarked with Sells Bros. for an Australian tour.¹⁹

In Australia over the winter of 1891-1892 Polly, along with the Misses Castello, Dutton and Carroll, rode in the ladies flat race.

She also rode and drove a five



This 1896 Forepaugh-Sells poster featured Gorman. John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Tibbals Ditigal collection.

horse tandem hitch on the hippodrome track. Bud did his customary lightning hurdle act.²⁰

Sells Bros. Circus arrived back in San Francisco from Australia on June 9th after a 28 day crossing. They had scored a success in

Bud Gorman on Ringling Bros. Circus in 1908. Circus World Museum collection.



Australia despite their horses being quarantined when they entered the country. The best ones were shot by order of the veterinary inspector who claimed that they had glanders. Sells Bros. officials strenuously denied this charge. In spite of the show people thinking that the glanders charge was an attempt to knock the show out, it triumphed over this obstacle.

Back in California, Sells Bros. showed in Oakland on July 1 and

2 at San Pablo and 24th Street and in San Francisco on July 15 to 25 at the 8th and Market Street lot. Polly did manege riding and Effie Dutton drove five horses in tandem over hurdles, gates and bars. The principal riders were Polly Lee, Effie and William Dutton, Daisy Belmont, William Showles, Lavater Lee and Bud Gorman. Gorman was featured on a lithograph doing his 35 horse act. Polly was also pictured on a lithograph, standing on one foot, and riding bareback. For the San Francisco engagement a streamer pasted at the top of the litho stated "just returned from Australia." She was declared the "undisputed and unquestionable leading premier equestrienne of the world in her absolutely unapproachable and inimitable Grand Principal Act of Bare Back Riding." Other features listed on the bill were Roman hippodrome, 3 Ring Circus, 2 elevated stages, 5 continent menagerie, Imperial Japanese Troupe, Hassan Ben Ali's Moorish Caravan, Arabian Nights Entertainment and Spectacular Pilgrimage to Mecca.

On December 26, 1892 Polly and Bud were on the Philadelphia Winter Circus. John Purvis again clowned for Polly's principal act in Display #6 and in Display #10 Bud did his great hurdle act.²¹

The vivacious Polly was again doing graceful riding on Sells Bros in 1893.²² Other equestriennes were Miss Melville, Daisy Dale and Lulu

Stickney. The leading male riders that year were Frank Melville, Bud Gorman, William Weitzel, Lew Scott and Master Melville. Featured acts were: Display #5: Beautiful manege by Pauline Lee concluding with five horse tandem team on the hippodrome track. This feat was depicted on a Sells Bros. Lithograph: "The daring and accomplished horsewoman in her marvelously thrilling act of driving five California jumping horses over gates and hurdles."

Display #10: Ring One--Principal bareback act--Pauline Lee; Ring Two--Juggling on bareback horse--Lavater Lee. Display #13: Ring One--Principal bareback somersault rider--Frank Melville; Ring Two--Pirouetting and somersaulting on bareback horse--Lavater Lee. Display #15: 35 horses driven on hippodrome track--Albert Weitzel. Display #17: Ring One--Lightning hurdle riding--Bud Gorman; this act was portrayed on an 1893 lithograph with following description: "Renowned bareback equestrian with an absolutely unbroken record of the most adroit, the most skillful and the most celebrated bareback rider the world has produced, now riding a limited and special engagement" Ring Two--Hurdle riding--George Zorella. Display #21: Ring #1--Four horses ridden by Bud Gorman. Ring #2--Four horses ridden by Albert Weitzel. Hippodrome Races: #6: 2 horse Roman Standing Race--Albert Weitzel, Spader Johnson, Lavater Lee; #10: 4 horse Roman chariot race--Lizette McIntyre and Albert Weitzel.

Due to illness, Polly Lee was absent from the performance from May 3 at New Albany, Indiana until June 10 at Louisville, Kentucky.

Sister Rose Lee was a bareback rider and juggler on Walter L. Main in 1893 and experienced the great train wreck of that show in Pennsylvania near Altoona.

In 1894, Polly and Bud were still on Sells Bros. doing their usual presentations. Charley Reed and son were equestrians. Lavater Lee was a bareback rider.²³ The Gormans were back on Sells in 1895.²⁴

In late 1895 the Sells brothers and James A. Bailey made a deal which created the Forepaugh Sells Circus



Rosa Lee, Polly's sister. Circus World Museum collection.

starting in 1896. Equestrian features that year included: Display #6: Ring 1--Polly Lee--high school riding; Ring Two--Educated ponies, trained and presented by Frank Melville; Ring Three--Bud Gorman--manege riding. Display #16: Ring One--Bareback riding--Linda Jeal; Ring Two--Bareback trick riding--Polly Lee, ringmaster Mile Tasco, clown, Mile. Celestine; Ring Three--Horseman-ship--Miss Orford. Display #18: Hurdle riding--Bud Gorman, Linda Jeal, Homer Hobson.

In the route book for that year, Bud Gorman was also listed as a door tender.

Polly Lee last appeared as an equestrienne in 1896.²⁵ At some point she had fallen while riding bareback and had to retire. She then worked for about four years as overseer of the wardrobe and costume designer for Forepaugh Sells. She contracted cancer which the doctors at that time attributed to her fall.

She died on December 10, 1902 at Protestant Hospital in Columbus, Ohio.²⁶ In the profession she was always highly esteemed as a lady of the finest qualities and as a performer. She was a devout member of the Catholic faith. Circus people in pain or trouble knew her as Miss Polly. They always had a friend in her. In her closing deed of charity she had placed handsome memorials over the graves of her father, step-

mother and brothers.

Lavater Lee died at the age of 36 in Southampton, England where his father, Charles Henry Lee, was born. He had been a bareback rider on Barnum & Bailey and his specialty in riding was a pirouette from knee to knee. He died in Sacramento in August of 1893. Rosa at the age of forty was still performing, juggling flaming torches while riding bareback and juggling while balanced on a large globe.

Bud Gorman continued on Adam Forepaugh and Sells Bros. from 1897 through 1907 as assistant equestrian director and for two years was also on the front door. He did high school riding, park riding and presented cake walking and gaited horses. Other riders appearing with him at various times were Misses Miaco, Kline, Harris, Mamie Hill and Mine. Lancaster as well as Al Dean and Master Harris. In 1899 and 1900 he "rode and drove 35 Kentucky thoroughbreds in a mad gallop thrice encircling the hippodrome course." In this event he was labeled the "Apollo Belvidere of Horsemen." In 1901 he presented the "flying pony," Mars, in leaps over high objects. In 1902 he was a bareback jockey rider and was presented, once again, as the "greatest of all hurricane bareback jockey riders of all the earth."

In 1908 through 1910 Gorman was on Ringling Bros. Circus, where he served as assistant equestrian director or equestrian director. His contract for 1910 specified his duties as equestrian director, ringmaster and lay out and lead parade for a salary of \$50 per week. At that time his address was Rosemont Flats, Oak & Young Streets, Columbus, Ohio.

From 1911 to 1913 he was equestrian director on Barnum & Bailey. In 1912 he married Gladys Lanigan, premier dancer and rider of some repute.²⁷

Gorman served as equestrian, director on Hagenbeck-Wallace from 1914 through 1919. His wife was a manege of rider of note through 1919. She also had a buggy manege presentation on the track in 1918 and 1919. In 1915 Gladys did an

equestrian statuary offering with a milk-white equine. In July of 1915 Bud Gorman received a gold medal from the show members, indicating that he and his wife were well liked. Later that summer the Gormans and Bert Cole were in an accident when their auto struck one of the big baggage wagons. That year they wintered at French Lick Springs, Indiana.

In 1916 Hagenbeck-Wallace grew to a very large circus. It traveled on 59 cars--2 advance, 2 box cars, 14 stock cars, 28 sixty foot flats and 13 sleepers. That year Barnum & Bailey had 85 cars, Ringling Bros. had 82 and Sells-Floto had 42. The big top was a six pole 165 foot round with five 50' straight sections. The menagerie also had six poles with an 85 round plus five 40' middle pieces. The dressing room was a 60' with three 40's and the side show was an 80 plus two 40's. There were two draft stock tents, 30 by 50 feet, and two dining tops, 40 by 100 feet. The kitchen top was 30 by 50 feet.

That year Jake Posey was boss hostler and Dutch Ricardo and his wife were the wild animal trainers. In display #12 the mix of high school and manege acts was rather unusual. On the track three equines danced and cavorted. Gladys Gorman rode Magic while Dallie Julian was on Black Beauty and John White rode a high school mule. In Ring One were well trained horses, ridden by the Misses Catanach, Milvo and Jeffries. The center ring had an unusual posing act of an elephant, zebra, horse and two dogs. In Ring Three high school horses were ridden by the Misses Brengk, Jenks and Partello.

In February of 1917 James Robinson died while visiting the Gormans at French Lick. He had been retired for about 25 years. On Hagenbeck-Wallace in 1917 the Cottrell Powell Troupe and Emma Donovan were among the prominent equestrians.²⁸

Gladys Gorman remembered the tragic train accident the next year. "In 1918 we were with the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus. We had a terrible accident in Hammond, Indiana. An empty troupe train ran into five coaches and killed 85 people. Mr. Gorman did not think he was



Gorman and his second wife Gladys. Circus World Museum collection.

hurt, but the following year he began dragging his feet when walking. I asked him to retire from the circus business. He did so in 1919. His walking got gradually worse. He began walking on crutches. Then he couldn't even walk on crutches and he took to a wheel chair to which he has been confined ever since." This injury turned out to be so severe that at some point it was necessary to amputate one of his legs.²⁹

William E. "Bud" Gorman died at the age of 87 at his home in Lima, Ohio on February 11, 1940. He had resided in Lima for his last 10 years with his wife. His services were in Louisville, Kentucky.³⁰

Gorman never liked to talk about himself and wouldn't even do so at the height of his career. Although socially prominent and sought out at all functions of the circus elite, he was always timid and retiring by nature. He was well groomed and a true gentleman. By observing the very stylish clothes Bud wore while equestrian director, one could keep up with the current fashions. He felt that if you desired a well dressed show, the equestrian director's wardrobe had to be a leading example.

Notes

1. A source for some of the information in the Charles Henry Lee family prior to 1878 was found in Regina V. Phelan's book, *The Gold*

Chain, Arthur H. Clark Co., Glendale, California, 1987.

2. *The Circus Scrap Book*, January 1930, p. 5-7.

3. *New York Clipper*, March 20, 1875, p. 407.

4. Cooper, Bailey & Co. Circus, route book, 1876.

5. Cooper, Bailey & Co. Circus, route book, 1877.

6. Great London Circus, newspaper ad, 1878.

7. Phelan, *op. cit.*

8. *New York Clipper*, November 21, 1885, p. 567.

9. *New York Clipper*, October 6, 1883, pp. 472, 480.

10. Sells Bros. Circus route book 1881; *New York Clipper* November 26, 1881, pp. 674,

683.

11. *New York Clipper*, October 13, 1883, p. 500.

12. S. H. Barrett & Co., program, 1884.

13. Sells Bros. Circus, newspaper ad, program, herald, route book, 1884.

14. *New York Clipper*, March 7, 1885 p. 816; Sells Bros. Circus, route book, 1885.

15. Sells Bros. Circus, newspaper ad, 1886.

16. *New York Clipper*, May 18, 1889, p. 61.

17. *Hobbies Magazine*, August 1934, p. 16.

18. *New York Clipper*, November 8, 1890, p. 558; *ibid.*, November 22, 1890, p. 587.

19. Sells Bros. Circus, route book, 1891.

20. Sells Bros. Circus, route book 1892 (Australia), 1891-1892 book.

21. Philadelphia Winter Circus, program, 1892.

22. *New York Clipper*, October 28, 1893, p. 545; Sells Bros. Circus, route book, 1893.

23. *New York Clipper*, March 24, 1894, p. 37.

24. Sells Bros. Circus, route book, 1895.

25. Adam Forepaugh-Sells Bros. Circus, route book, 1896.

26. *Billboard*, December 20, 1902.

27. *The Circus Scrap Book*, *op. cit.*

28. *Billboard*, March 3, 1917 p. 3.

29. *The Circus Scrap Book*, *op. cit.*

30. *Billboard*, February 17, 1940, p. 29.

Injury Stalked Junior Ruffin's Performing Career With Cats

By Lane Talburt

Copyright© 2007

In Part One Junior Ruffin described his upbringing by the famed fighting-cat performer, Clyde Beatty, who served as mentor and surrogate father. This article relates the formative years of his post-Beatty circus career, when he became known as the wild animal trainer-performer "Prince Bogino" to audiences all over North America. In recalling events, the 69-year-old retiree may have occasionally juxtaposed dates, but his descriptive and larger-than-life imagery of specific events remains vivid, and frequently humorous.

The minute he stepped from his diesel cab pulling the pole trailer onto a new lot in an Alabama town, Manuel "Junior" Ruffin knew he was going to have to tread lightly.

For one, rain had come down hard on the previous day, and puddles of water were everywhere.

And secondly, an all-white, 20-member delegation of local sponsors was waiting to see the show set up. They were unaware that the newly-arrived, disheveled worker was Hoxie Tucker's canvas boss; to the committee, he was just a hulking black man.

As if the moisture content in the air weren't already thick enough, the racial tension was overwhelming. The local committee chairman immediately attempted to put Junior in his place:

"I'll never forget, the sponsor said, 'What do you do, boy?'"

"And I said, 'I do everything.' And he said, 'I didn't ask you that. We asked you what you're doing with the circus.'"

"I said, 'Sir, my job is to come here and lay out the lot.'"

Pushing a steel rod into the earth, Ruffin quickly discerned that the soil was so rain-saturated that tent stakes

would not be able to sustain the weight and pull of the big top. Ruffin strolled over to the unfriendly group.

"One of the sponsors asked, 'What do you want, boy?'"

"I said, 'We won't even be able to put up the show here.'"

"He said, 'Let's don't even talk to him. He don't know what he's talking about.'"

Tucker arrived later to find the entire fleet backed up on the street, Junior having defied General Manager John Hall by refusing to allow any circus vehicle to drive onto the muddy field.

When the outraged circus committee besieged the owner, Tucker held them back. Out of their hearing range, he asked Ruffin, "Well, what's the problem, old man?"

"And I said, 'Lookie here,' and I

Junior Ruffin. Jim Cole photo.



pushed my rod all the way down in the soil. 'It's like this all the way around,' I told him."

Tucker and Ruffin walked back to the awaiting delegation, and the owner informed them the circus definitely would need another lot. "Hoxie said, 'My big-top boss said we cannot show on this lot. Whatever he tells me about this show, that's what I listen to.'"

"You could imagine the looks on the faces of those guys," Ruffin said, proudly. That was a key incident when Junior discovered how much trust Tucker placed in him, even though he considered his boss to be one of the most racist men around.

In addition to the physical blows he suffered from the claws and teeth of the lions and tigers he presented in the ring, Ruffin also endured psychological blows to his ego. They came with his ground-breaking distinction as the first black big cat trainer under the big top. Especially in the South in the 1960s and 1970s, he was subjected to racial taunts--and an occasional object hurled into the cage--by the almost all-white audiences. He also was the frequent target of racial jokes by circus bosses.

Even as his professional career largely flourished, Ruffin's personal life hit several speed bumps. He spent six months behind jail bars waiting trial after being accused of white slavery and rape of a minor female whom another circus worker had placed in the back of his truck. In another instance, New York City detectives initially pegged him as the prime suspect in the brutal murder of his first wife from whom he had been separated for five years.

His performance career ended in 1968 when a lion attacked him in a training compound in Sarasota. The most crushing physical blow, howev-

er, came in 1987 when Junior's right leg was almost severed above the ankle by the wheel of a run-away wagon on the flats at the Ringling train yards in Venice, Florida. That accident placed Ruffin on permanent disability and ended a career which started across the continent in Los Angeles in 1952 as Clyde Beatty's cage boy.

Along the way, though, he racked up a number of signal accomplishments. In addition to breaking the color barrier in the steel arena, Ruffin became the first black canvas boss, and, most significantly, Ringling Bros.' first black trainmaster, a key management position. To date, no other African-American has held that position at Ringling.

Throughout his 25-year career, Junior Ruffin was determined to make something of himself. He always retained the advice of a veteran laborer on the Clyde Beatty Circus, which Ruffin joined when he was in his early teens. "I remember this old black man--I had to be 15, 16 years old. He told me, 'Listen, Junior, I see something in you that you probably don't see in yourself. But learn everything you can, because one of these days, it'll pay off for you.'" And learn he did, from some of the most seasoned circus bosses, performers and journeymen.

He particularly remembered the advice of his first two mentors, Clyde Beatty and Dave Hoover. Beatty, who took in the rag-tag teen-age youth as his cage boy and later as a trainer-performer, told Ruffin, "You cannot teach the animal to learn one way and then expect it to perform another."

"And once he saw that I was doing something right," Ruffin recalls, "that's when he gave pointers."

The other pointer came from Hoover as Junior embarked on his solo performing career. "Junior," he told me, "the only way you are going to be able to fight this (racism) is you be the animal trainer, and then people will open their eyes. Just continue to do what you're doing." Although Junior's formal educa-

tion ended at the tenth grade, he had no shortage of mentors, and he was an eager learner.

Breaking in on the Beatty show, he closely observed the behavior of lions and tigers while cleaning their enclosures on the road and at winter quarters. He also assisted elephant trainer Richard Shipley in caring for the circus' nine elephants until he became proficient at putting the bulls through their routines. In 1959, he worked a trio of bulls for Beatty and the Hamid-Morton Circus at Palisades Park, across the Hudson River in New York City.

He also picked up the equivalent of a graduate degree in the art of circus operations from the likes of circus owners Hoxie Tucker, Clifford Vargas and Ian Garden Sr. (See sidebar story with some of Junior's jackpots on Tucker.)

Progressing in the circus business, Ruffin accumulated the skills necessary to build and maintain a circus. Along the way, he collected tricks of the trade not only as a trainer, performer and manager, but also as a prop hand, mechanic, welder and canvas man--he mastered every aspect of putting up and tearing down both push-pole and bale ring tents.

In addition to Beatty's rail circus,

Junior Ruffin, age 17 and Clyde Beatty. Ruffin collection.



Ruffin earned his keep on the lots of Clyde Bros., Hoxie Bros., Circus Vargas, Garden Bros., Circus Gatini, the fairly obscure Floyd Bros, and, at his peak, Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey.

Ruffin's first opportunity to work alone publicly in the steel arena before an audience came in the summer of 1958. That's when he presented a mixed cat act at the Barnum Festival in Bridgeport, Connecticut. The outdoor act, which he had broken for Evelyn Curry of Chattanooga, Tennessee, drew one of the largest crowds in his career, and it was one of the most memorable. Ruffin also worked the same act in shopping malls throughout the Northeast.

Next to Beatty, Dave Hoover had the most influence on Ruffin's early performing career. In 1962, Hoover and Sam Caldwell took over Beatty's Jungleland Zoo and Wild Animal Compound near Miami. When Beatty, who had opened the facility in 1959 (he leased it from George Hamid), resumed his arena act on the road in 1962, he left Junior behind to break in and present a group of young cats in the daily Jungleland wild animal encounters.

Jungleland would be the last lot where he would be introduced under his own name, Junior Ruffin. (Beatty had early on tagged him "Junior" because he was unable to remember Ruffin's first name.)

In late summer 1962, Hoover dispatched Ruffin on his first touring circus assignment as a cat trainer. Hoover had sold another cat act, which Junior also had broken, to Howard Suesz, owner of Clyde Bros.

Hoover wanted Ruffin to spend several weeks with the show which played a heavy Shrine route in the Midwest in a combination of ballparks, indoor arenas and under canvas. At Suesz's winter quarters in Edmond, Oklahoma, Ruffin recalls seeing a circus graveyard of rusting trucks and rotting trailers bearing the Hagen Bros. title, which Suesz had taken off the road.

When he stepped into the cage for his first Clyde Bros. date, Ruffin was announced as "Prince Bongo," the subjugator of the wild beasts. His co-performers included "the whole

Dubsky family-Harry and John;" Gee Gee Engesser--"she had the huskies," with her son, Billy Powell (now Southern regional vice-president for Ringling); Eddie Eikins, who worked the show-owned elephants; and Wally Naughton with baby bears. During the previous Clyde Bros. season, Naughton and Rex Williams had been partners in a flying act, and Williams also handled the elephants in the ring.

Ruffin extended his stay at Clyde Bros. until the season closed at Shreveport, Louisiana. Before returning to Hoover and Jungleland, Ruffin turned his young cats over to a new arrival from Chile, Jose Barreda. Jose's wife, Anna, was hired to perform on the high wire. One of the Barredas' sons, Jorge, was then only nine. Jorge later married Lou Ann Jacobs, daughter of famed Ringling clown Lou Jacobs.

Back at the former Beatty facility in North Miami, Ruffin began breaking yet another group of cats to debut the next spring on Sells & Gray, under Bill English's management. "Of course, I never made the opening day," the black trainer said.

In March, 1963, Ruffin drove a truck-trailer containing his cats from Florida to Warner-Robbins, Georgia. He made it to the lot but not into the big top for what would have been his opening performance. That's because police in Warner-Robbins, acting on a tip from the parents of a 16-year-old girl, who had ran away from home in Florida, hauled him in for questioning. Ruffin admitted that, as a favor to a co-worker who was riding shotgun in the cab en route from Bradenton, he had allowed the girl to take shelter in the sleeping compartment of the trailer containing the cats for Junior's new act.

Even though the teen told police that Ruffin had not molested her in any way, in fact, Junior had dropped the girl and her paramour off at a local laundromat, the authorities still accused him of white slavery and rape. He was fearful his life might come to a sudden, violent end.

"Remember, this was in the early sixties, and they weren't above hanging anybody even back then. So it was pretty rough there for a while. But I had this one guy, he was



Junior Ruffin on Hoxie Bros. 1974. Pfening Archives.

a detective--he was from Pennsylvania (not from the South). And he said, 'You ought to go back to Florida (where Junior's co-worker originally picked up the underage townie). You'll get a better deal in Florida than you will here in Georgia.'"

Ruffin was transferred to the Florida jurisdiction where he pleaded guilty to charges of transporting a minor across a state line. "They gave me a public defender, which I didn't know what that was all about. But I told him, 'I'm going with the truth,' and that's what I went (into court) with.

"And I'll never forget when they called me up to be sentenced, the judge called me in there and said, 'You know, we checked your record, we checked where you lived,

Leonard B. "Hoxie" Tucker. Fred Pfening photo.



we checked with the circus, and you've got a good record. How did you get caught in something like that?' I said, 'Your honor, because I knew the guy who put the girl back there in the truck, in the sleeper.'

"And he said, 'Well you have to pay for that. We're going to sentence you to five years.' And, can you imagine, I was shaking so much, you know what I mean? And then the judge said, 'But at probation. We're going to keep your record clean. But if you violate this, I guarantee you will come back and you will do five years.'" Ruffin spent his probationary period working as a garbage hauler for the city of Hollywood, Florida.

After completing three years of his probated sentence, Ruffin began working again for Hoover at Jungleland in 1968. That same year, Hoxie Tucker approached Junior with the line, "Hey, I've got a good deal for you."

"What's that?" Ruffin responded.

"If I buy the old Swede Johnson lion act," Ruffin remembers Tucker saying, "would you come over and work for me?" (Tucker had dissolved his partnership with Doc Bartok and intended to take out his own show with the purchase of Johnson's circus.)

"Well, I didn't see no Swede Johnson lion act, and I didn't know what Swede had. But I said ok and that's when I started with Hoxie--in 1969." Ruffin inherited Johnson's eight female lions and later added five male lions and a few tigers.

The arrangement was mutually beneficial--for Ruffin because Tucker vouched for the young trainer with his parole officer so that he could travel out of state, and for Tucker, who gained a lion tamer at a salary of \$25 a week. By the time Ruffin left Hoxie Bros. five years later, his earnings had increased to a respectable \$500 per week during the season.

"When I went over there, Hoxie made every decision. Nobody questioned whatever he did, or whatever he said. He always said, 'There's two ways of doing things around this

show: the right way and the Hoxie way. So when you're doing the Hoxie way, you're doing it the right way."

Ruffin said he was one of the very few people on the show who could talk back to the moody circus owner. "Once I convinced him that I knew what I was doing, he stayed out of my way."

Although Ruffin was signed on to work the cat act, he learned other skills leading to his promotion as big top boss. Initially he was a mechanic. Then Ruffin persuaded Tucker to buy him a welding machine--his mentor for that task on the old Clyde Beatty Circus had been Art Concello's brother, Joe. "So Hoxie found out I could do that, and everything started breaking then," Ruffin chuckled.

Next, the by-now seasoned veteran inherited the assignment of putting up the big top, then the side show top. Because he assumed the duties of laying out the lot, he was the second to arrive at the next day's lot, driving a diesel and pulling the pole wagon. (The first on each lot was "King Charles" Weathersby, who also arrowed the show each night following his performance in the side show--his minstrel band did the come-in, and he was big show band leader.)

Meanwhile, for the purposes of the circus program and ringmaster's announcement, Ruffin's ring name was altered to "Prince Bogino"--from Prince Bongo, his former Clyde Bros. billing. When asked by suspicious Southern circus-goers if Prince Bogino really came from Africa, as announced, Ruffin would respond that he had acquired his Southern accent since immigrating to the United States.

But Bogino was clearly not an African family name. In fact, an Italian family with a risley act on the show, the Boginos, offered Junior the use of their surname. The matriarch of that family, Karla Wallenda Bogino, later gave birth to Enrico "Ricky" Wallenda Bogino. Ruffin amusingly asserts that Ricky Wallenda still refers to him as his

"Uncle Bogino."

In addition to his cat act and operations responsibilities, Ruffin expanded his face time before audiences when Tucker went on a buying spree for baby elephants. He acquired six of them and brought Rex Williams on to the show in 1972 to break them. In addition to getting the punks ready for the ring, he also presented the show-owned trio of adults. In addition, Williams, his wife Ava and their daughter Darlene worked three rings of horses. Williams left at the end of that season.



Ruffin working baby elephants on Hoxie Bros. Ruffin collection.

In 1973, the John Herriott family joined the Hoxie Bros. troupe. Along with his ringmaster-performance-director duties, Herriott was the first to put the five broken baby elephants through their twice-daily routines. His oldest daughter Laura presented the Herriott's prized horse, American Anthem.

Laura also assisted Ruffin when he unexpectedly assumed the responsibilities for showcasing the five adult Asian females. The show's previous elephant trainer, Kenny Eiker, had left to join Dory Miller on the Carson & Barnes Circus.

When the Herriotts left, Junior found himself working the six punks at the end of the 1973 season. He also had the honor of naming them. He tagged three Asians with the names of Hoxie's grandchildren--Janet, Stacy and Kelly. As Janet grew up, she attacked and almost killed the doting circus owner in the show's backyard. Ruffin recalls he sharply cautioned Tucker not to spoil the young elephant by playfully butting heads with her.

Ruffin also assigned family names

to the other three babies. One, an Asian, became Irene after Tucker's daughter. As to the two Africans, "I named the female Betty, after Hoxie's wife, because she was mild. The male I named Hoxie--he was something else."

Two traumatic events punctuated Ruffin's life while he was on the Hoxie show. As the show was touring Ohio in 1971, he got word that his first wife, Earline Thomas, whom he had married six years previously, had been strangled in her apartment in New York.

Upon contacting the Bronx detective investigating the murder, Ruffin discovered that he was initially the prime suspect. He told investigators that he and his wife had been separated for five years, and that he had not been able to leave any of the Hoxie lots by himself for more than 15 minutes at a time since the start of the season because of the extent of his duties.

Ruffin spotted the detective shadowing him through four Ohio towns. Twice, Ruffin remembers, he was taken to a local police station for questioning. He also submitted to a polygraph examination.

Eventually, the investigator became satisfied that Junior was no longer a suspect. Ruffin says he does not know to this day whether the case was solved, or what happened to his daughter by Earline.

The circus-going public remained unaware of his personal problems. This was not the case in the ring. On the opening night of the 1973 Hoxie season in Coral Springs, just south of Miami, a female lion attacked him in front of a straw house. One of his boosters--Dave Hoover--sat ringside. "And I started grandstanding," Ruffin guffawed, "which is a no-no in the animal training business. As I was trying to get this lion to stand on her legs, she started to charge me." Ruffin was feinting with a chair and a cracking a whip in the style of Beatty and many old-time cat trainers.

"But instead of her reaching up on

the chair, she had hooked her claws inside the chair into my left hand."

The endangered tamer had to carefully extricate three claws from his bleeding hand. "I remember Hoover saying afterward, 'Now waltz out of that sting.' And I did. Matter of fact, these are the claw marks on my hand," he laughed, pointing to the scars.

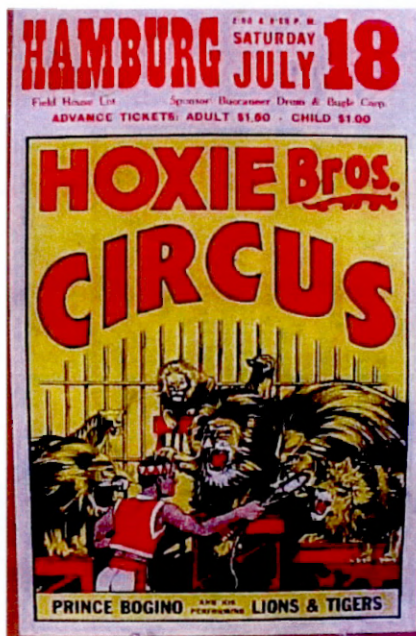
The injury was serious enough to cause infection to set in. When Ruffin attempted to return to the cage later in the Midwest, he was attacked again, and that ended his appearances as Prince Bogino on Hoxie Bros. The show sent the cats to Peru, Indiana, for the rest of the season because Tucker was unable to find a replacement for Ruffin. A few opined that fear of the felines would forever prevent Junior from stepping through the arena door again. He would later prove them wrong.

But Ruffin continued his other duties, including returning to the ring to work the big elephants the day after he was injured. He also continued to move the show every day.

In the fall of 1973, when the show returned to winter quarters at Sweetwater, near the Miami International Airport, Junior found his pay reduced to \$175 a week—"and sometimes Hoxie would skip a week or two paying me when he wasn't around." Ruffin was more fortunate than other workers, who were paid \$5 plus meals and a roof overhead at the ramshackle quarters, a former dairy farm.

In addition to refurbishing the fleet, Ruffin inherited the task of framing a new version of Lewis Bros. Circus. Tucker had bought a controlling interest in the show. In the meantime, the cat act which had spent most of the previous season in Peru after Junior's in-ring accidents was returned to the Hoxie compound, minus several felines which had died at the Indiana facility.

Although Ruffin's working relationship with Tucker had been mutually respectful but occasionally fitful, he reached a breaking point with the owner in early 1974. While on a shopping jaunt for replacement cats at the Chase Wild Animal Farm south of the Miami airport, Ruffin



One of two Hoxie window cards featuring Prince Bogino. Ruffin collection.

took a brief detour to meet Cliff Vargas, who had recently acquired the Miller and Johnson Circus from Charlie Germaine. Vargas handed Ruffin \$800 in cash as an inducement to make the jump to the new venture and proffered a \$1,000 weekly salary.

Just before Hoxie Bros. began its 1974 season, Ruffin approached Tucker, by then plagued by a series of heart attacks and a self-described nervous breakdown, with a proposal to buy four or five lion cubs from the exotic animal importer-exporter. "And they were like only \$50 apiece." He recalls. "I had the room [for the additional cats]; I had built this special trailer."

"Well, I caught him in one of his bad moods," Junior said of his confrontation with Tucker in the office wagon. It was witnessed by Bill Hill and Pete Cristiani, who Tucker introduced as the new managers of the Hoxie Bros. and Lewis Bros. units respectively. This management change admittedly caught Junior by surprise.

"And Hoxie said, 'Let's get this straightened out right now. I'm not going to have any more heart attacks and worry about these two units. From now on, you go to them [Hill and Cristiani] with any problem. Don't come to me for nothing.'"

Feeling left out in the reshuffling, Ruffin asked, "Where does that leave us when we've been in this together?"

"And he said, 'Well, that's the attitude I'm talking about. Furthermore, what is it you want?'"

"I told him about these animals. And he said, 'I'm not buying more lions. You got six or eight out there. You do with what you got. Or you do what you think best.'" What Junior thought best, after further consideration, was that he ought to accept Vargas's offer.

Ruffin noted that King Charles Weathersby and his crew of workers, which included his son John, arrived from Louisiana at winter quarters two days before the start of the season. "And King Charles said, 'Ali, I thought you weren't going to be here this year.'"

"And I responded, 'The band hasn't struck up yet.' On Friday night, just before the fleet was to hit the road the next day, Ruffin pulled off the lot for the last time. After depositing his trailer in Fort Lauderdale, Ruffin asked Gypsy Red aka John Jackson, a circus worker, to drop him off at the Miami airport. There he took a flight to El Paso, where he joined Vargas. King Charles, his son John, and Gypsy Red would figure into Junior's future plans.

"When I left Hoxie's in 1974, it took six men to replace what I was doing," Ruffin stated defiantly. "When I went over there, Hoxie had eight trucks; when I left, he had 29 trucks. That's how big they built it up."

Ruffin depended on all his accumulated skills with his new employer.

His former employer, for his part, was disgusted that Ruffin had not told him of his plans to leave. Tucker told Fred Powledge, author of *Mud Show*, an account of Powledge travels

with the circus during the 1974 season, that he would not welcome Junior's return.

The two protagonists eventually patched up their differences.

Ruffin reflected on that blowup with Hoxie. "I was just mad, because I think if Hoxie had said, 'OK. You can go down there and get three or four of those lions,' there would have

never been a Vargas. But I said to myself, 'Nah, I'm going to move on.'" (Next: Junior Ruffin encounters Cliff Vargas)

THE LORD GIVETH--

JACKPOTS ON HOXIE TUCKER

"Let me tell you, there'll never be another Hoxie. They broke the mold when they made him." Junior Ruffin declares Leonard B. "Hoxie" Tucker to be one of the greatest circus owners he ever worked for. At the same time, Tucker could be the most vexing, especially when the brim of his hat was turned down.

Tucker was a Southern-born, Southern-raised, penny pinching, high-grass, and, yes, racist circus owner. Ruffin should know. As a black big cat trainer and canvas boss, the stocky Ruffin had unusual access to the meteoric personality of the colorful showman.

Here are a few of Ruffin's favorite jackpots about Tucker, mostly in Junior's own words.

"Junior, here's \$100"

"I remember getting hurt real bad when I was on Hoxie Bros. My arm was bleeding when I came out of the arena [at the conclusion of his mixed lion-tiger act]; it was ripped open. Everybody was holding my arm, and blood was running out of it. And Hoxie came over and said, 'What happened?'

"Dime Wilson [the ringmaster], said, 'Hoxie, call the ambulance. Junior went and got his arm ripped open. And you'd better take him to the hospital.'

"Hoxie said, 'Oh, you can't do that.'

"And Dime said, 'What do you mean'

"Junior can't go to no hospital,' Hoxie said. 'Who's going to help me move the show?' You know, we were moving seven days a week.

"And they finally got somebody over and put a tourniquet around my arm there.

"Then we headed toward the generator truck, and Hoxie reached into his pocket, and he said, 'Here's a hundred dollars.' And I thought, 'Well, I guess he's going to send me on to the doctor, right?'"

Instead, "Hoxie called Harry Rooks, who was an old-time horse trainer--he was their generator man, and he came out. Hoxie said, 'Harry,



Betty and Hoxie Tucker. Pfening Archives.

do you have any diesel fuel?' And Harry said, 'Yeah, I've got some in a five-gallon can.'

"Hoxie said, 'Give it to me.'

"I said, 'I don't want you to put that on me.'

"Now listen, Junior. Hold your arm out here and let me show you something,' he said. "Let me put this on there, and if you have any trouble, if anything bothers you at all, you keep that hundred dollars.'

"So he poured the diesel fuel [on the wound], and it stopped bleeding. Then he put a big bandage on it. And I went and finished the rest of the show, took the tent down that night [Ruffin also was tent master], got up the next morning--because I used to go ahead of the show to lay out the next lot, and I was in the cookhouse drinking a cup of coffee when Hoxie got there.

"And he said, 'Hey, old man, how's your arm?'

"I said, 'Come to think of it, I forgot all about it.'

"He said, 'It's OK?'

"I said, 'Yeah.'

"And Hoxie said, 'Well, give me my hundred dollars back.'"

Racism Gets Under Hoxie's Hat

"We were showing in Roanoke, Virginia. Hoxie went down to the day-laborer place [for temporary help to put up the tent]. And he was paying the minimum wage, which was unheard of around the show. I think he was paying the [regular workmen] \$25 a week plus room and board. He brought me seven guys--six white guys and one black guy. And we went ahead, we got the show up. We were doing good. We were roping off the seats. "Well, a Mustang came up, and it blowed. And this lady--she was white and she had two

kids--beckoned me. And I didn't know what she was beckoning me for.

"And the black temporary guy on the crew said, 'Can I go outside the tent and talk to her?' And I said, 'Sure, I don't care.' He called me over, and he introduced me--that was his wife." Ruffin told the woman she could return in about an hour to pick up her husband at the ticket wagon, where the temp workman would get his pay.

"About 45 minutes later, Hoxie came through the top. He said, 'Junior, you finished with those guys?' I said, 'Pretty close.' He said, 'Hurry up, because I'm paying them by the hour.' And, aw, that was just eating him up.

"So we came out, and the guys were hanging the sidewall. We came out through the marquee and went out to the office area. And this black guy looks up, and his wife was coming up in the Mustang.

"Hoxie came over and said, 'Everybody here, Junior?' He was counting . . . one, two, three, four, five, six . . . And he said, 'Where's that colored boy?' I said, 'Oh, there he is over there.'

"Meanwhile, the guy is leaning in the car, hugging onto his wife. Hoxie saw that. He got so mad. Hoxie said, 'Hey, boy, come here.'

"And he said, 'What the hell do you think you're doing? I don't have that kind of stuff going on on my lot.'

"And the black guy said, 'I don't know why you're getting mad. That's my wife.'

Hoxie reached into his pocket and said, "You take this damn money and get off my lot."

"Everybody was looking at Hoxie, you know, 'What's your problem!'

"So Hoxie opened the door [to the office trailer] and said, 'Junior, come on in.' Just as I went behind him, he took that hat off, and he said, 'God, look at that. Is he still out there?'

"I said, 'Who?'

"That boy I gave that money to.' He had given him \$800.

"Yes, I did, Junior. I wouldn't lie to you.'

"Doesn't it pay you to be prejudiced?' I said.

"Hoxie said, 'Well, I'm not prejudiced.'

"And I thought about it later and said to myself, 'It's just business as usual.' Hoxie didn't know any better because he was raised like that. But we had a mutual understanding with each other, and we respected each other, you know."

CHASING CROSS-COUNTRY SALLY WAS NO SKIN OFF RUFFIN'S BACK

Though primarily remembered as a big-cat trainer and performer, Junior Ruffin also had a few memorable encounters with elephants. Three incidents stand out as unforgettable.

Junior first met Cross-Country Sally in 1960 when the Asian elephant was a new arrival at Clyde Beatty's Jungleland animal compound in North Miami. Sally made the journey to Florida by truck from the Carson & Barnes winter quarters in Ocean Springs, Mississippi.

Elephant trainer William "Buckles" Woodcock recently recalled to the author that he had helped his father, William Woodcock Sr., Fred Logan, and circus owner D. R. Miller load Sally into the Beatty truck. "It was a battle royal," getting her into the back of the vehicle, Buckles wrote on his internet blog.

Junior, who as wild-animal superintendent also presented separate elephant and cat acts at the Beatty compound, quickly learned about Sally's flightiness when the truck pulled into the elephant's new quarters.

"She came out of that truck running, you know what I mean," Ruffin chuckled. "We chased her all over North Miami.

"I had one of those long shepherd's staffs with the bull hook on the end of it, and we had the chain on her, and I was walking her around. Beatty and Dave Hoover came up, and just as they got out of the car, Sally took off.

"And I took off beside her."

When Ruffin reached up to grab the elephant's chain with the hook, Sally suddenly shook her head, causing the other end of the staff to catch in Junior's belt. "She was dragging me across the asphalt pavement. And I was screaming. And it took all the



Manuel "Junior" Ruffin in 2006. Author's photo.

skin off my right arm."

After getting her under control, Ruffin remembers Beatty walking up to him and, in a teasing tone, asked, "Junior, why did you let that elephant run like that?"

Ruffin blamed his mentor for purchasing Sally sight unseen from Miller.

"Beatty never forgave Dory for selling him that elephant, because, you know, if you're going to buy an elephant, you're going to check with somebody with experience. You don't just say, 'Do you have an elephant for sale?' Because you know what they're going to do? Give you the worst one they have. [Miller] sold it cheap; Beatty thought it was a good deal. And Sally was unbelievable."

But he did work Sally twice daily in the ring with another elephant, a one-eyed female acquired from George Hamid.

In the early 1970s, Ruffin was helping Rex Williams break in another female, Hazel, for Hoxie Bros. at that show's winter quarters in South Miami. Ruffin said Hoxie Tucker had acquired the bull from the defunct Beers-Barnes circus, but she had only performed as a solo elephant and not with other bulls.

As Ruffin remembers, he and Williams were attempting to train Hazel to do a front foot mount on another bull. During the workout, the trainers had chained Hazel's left front leg and right rear leg between

two parked tractor trailers. As Junior reached down to unchain Hazel's front leg, the agitated elephant landed a kick in Ruffin's ribcage. Though he was knocked to the ground, Ruffin suffered only bruises.

Ruffin had joined Beatty as his cage assistant in 1952 but was later taken under Richard Shipley's wing. The elephant trainer taught the Beatty protege how to present bulls.

At the end of the 1958 season, Shipley left the Beatty show to join Ringling Bros., and the 19-year-old Ruffin inherited the job of caring for the nine Beatty elephants at Jungleland.

In early 1959 the young trainer got his first exposure to a lion's attack on an elephant. As Ruffin recalls, Joe Frisco Sr. had arrived at the park for a layover, accompanied by two chimps and a six-year-old Asian bull, Kandy. At that time Frisco was zoo director at Muscatine, Iowa, and was on a promotional tour with the three animals.

That night Junior said he was feeding the young elephant hay that had been stacked up in the corral. Minutes later he heard screams from the baby. He discovered that Leo, a lion owned by Dave Hoover, had escaped from its enclosure and had jumped on Kandy's back.

Frisco, in a telephone conversation from his home near Peoria, Illinois, with the writer, confirmed Ruffin's details. Frisco said he and several workers attempted to intervene. But the frenzied lion ignored their thrashings until a handler flashed the headlights of a truck on the attack scene. Only then did Leo retreat into an empty barn, where the lion was locked in for the night. None of the handlers were harmed.

Kandy, said Frisco, was badly bitten about her head but survived.

The elephant was later returned to the Muscatine zoo.

Somewhere in Frisco's memorabilia is a photo of Junior holding Frisco's infant son, Joe Frisco Jr., in the palm of his hand. During the 2007 season, Joe Jr. was elephant superintendent on the Ringling Bros. Red unit, and Joe III (Little Joe) handled three Carson and Barnes bulls on the Kelly Miller Circus.

Swan and Bates A Giant Love Story

By Steve DeGenaro

This is an unusual tale about a couple who fell madly and deeply in love, married, worked together, and eventually retired to live out their years. The bride died young, leaving behind a widower who mourned his lost love for years. The couple was beloved in their town, well known throughout America's popular culture, and by all accounts were genuinely nice people. The couple's names were Martin Van Buren Bates and Anna Swan, the "Kentucky Giant" and the "Nova Scotia Giantess," and their combined height reached over fourteen feet. This truly giant couple settled in Seville, Ohio in the mid 1870's, where they lived until their deaths.

Capt. and Mrs. Bates. Authors collection.



Their popularity was as immense as their height, and these citizens of Seville were accepted and adored by their neighbors for years.

Bates and Swan performed on the side show circuit, appeared in the popular "dime museums" where medical anomalies and so called "freaks" were displayed, and traveled with several famous circuses including Barnum's and Cole's. Unlike many of the hoax "freaks" and staged exotica, Bates and Swan truly were medical anomalies, suffering from gigantism. Perhaps caused by pituitary or other glandular disorders, their gigantism was associated with a host of health problems including heart enlargement and many musculoskeletal problems. Despite this, Bates and Swan enjoyed relatively good health.

Anna Hannon Swan was born in New Annan, Nova Scotia in 1846, one of thirteen children. Anna's parents were of normal stature, but Anna grew tall quickly. Over seven feet tall by the age of fifteen, she eventually grew to 7' 5". Friends and colleagues described Anna's personality and disposition as sweet and personable. She seems to have been quite comfortable with her height, and was a consummate performer, eventually working at Barnum's Museum, where she would do poetry readings, lecture the audience on her experiences as a giantess, and pose with midgets for photos and displays.

P. T. Barnum described her as "an intelligent and by no means ill-looking girl" and quickly hired her for his show. Perhaps because she was a wonderful and friendly performer, Anna became one of

Barnum's headline attractions. Tom Thumb called her "a well liked sister to all in the show and a dear friend to many." Her contemporaries in the show included Mr. and Mrs. Tom Thumb, Commodore Nutt, and the famous black Siamese twins, Millie and Christine. Anna appeared at Barnum's Museum throughout the 1860s.

According to the account in the *New York Tribune* of July 14, 1865, Anna almost lost her life in the disastrous fire at the museum the previous night. Because of her huge size, she couldn't get through any of the available exits, and she feared the stairs would break if she used them. A nearby derrick was commandeered and eventually she was lowered to

Another image of the couple. Author's collection.





Anna Swan Bates. Author's collection.

the ground via block and tackle.

The unfortunate Anna was again at Barnum's Museum on March 3, 1868 when a second fire destroyed the building. She and the Circassian woman shared sleeping quarters on the third floor. This time she walked down the stairs to safety, but lost her entire wardrobe and jewelry, estimated at \$3000, a considerable amount in 1868. In 1869 she sailed for England where she was exhibited for a time, returning by early April when she appeared at the Museum of Living Wonders, a dime museum charging adults fifty cents, in San Francisco.

Meanwhile, another giant was trying his luck at show business. Martin Van Buren Bates had been born in Kentucky in 1837 or 1839. An intelligent and extremely personable and outgoing man, Bates was 6' tall at the age of 15. He continued to grow well into his twenties, finally reaching 7'2" and 470 lbs. A school teacher by profession, he joined the Confederate Army in 1861. Bates saw action at the Battle of Middle Creek, the second Battle of Cynthiana, and a battle in the Cumberland Gap. At one point, he was captured and remained a prisoner of war until he was exchanged for Union prisoners.

After the war, Bates returned to Kentucky and taught for a short time. A celebrity because of his stature, Bates attracted the attention of a circus in nearby Cincinnati and he was recruited away from Kentucky into a traveling show in the late 1860s. Soon after, he was engaged by the John Robinson Circus at a much higher salary.

Bates and Swan met while touring in Europe in 1870. By then, the two were part of Judge Ingall's Show of Human Oddities. The exhibition was well received in Europe and attracted the attention of European royalty. Deeply in love, the couple decided to marry while on tour in England. On June 17, 1871 they were married in St. Martin's-in-the-Fields Church in London. The wedding was reported in all major European newspapers and was attended by royalty including Prince John of Luxembourg, the Prince of Wales, and Duke Vladimir of Russia. Theater stars, performers from the circus, and celebrities from both Europe and America were there to wish the new couple happiness in their life together. Queen Victoria gave the groom a gold watch which weighed four pounds and set with diamonds. The bride received a diamond ring.

Bates and Swan continued their tour of Europe well into 1872. In May that year, Anna gave birth to an eighteen-pound baby who died almost immediately after birth. They finished the tour and returned to the states where they worked with the W. W. Cole Circus and a few smaller companies. Well known in the industry, the husband and wife team were well compensated for their shows and sought after by the managers of circuses. "Colonel Bates is a fascinating showman," wrote one of the Cole managers, "a real crowd pleaser who engages the audience in witty conversation and appeals to both young

ON EXHIBITION IN MAIN TENT IN
W. W. COLE'S N. Y. & N. O. Circus and Menagerie,

THE TWO TALLEST PEOPLE ON EARTH!!
EACH LACKING 11 INCH 8 FEET HIGH
COMBINED WEIGHT ONE HALF TON.

THE GIANTS
Capt. M. V. Bates & Wife

The giant couple as advertised on a W. W. Cole advertising card. Pfening Archives.

and old with his stories and his wit."

In 1875, the couple decided to settle down. For years, both of them had led lives largely on the road. The touring and performing had grown old and the young couple was wealthy enough to live almost anywhere. They decided to settle in Seville, Ohio, a small farm community located in the northern part of the state.

Bates bought over one hundred acres of farmland outside Seville and had a huge house built for him and his wife. A reporter gave a vivid picture of the house: "It is a difficult matter to convey an adequate idea of the proportions of such a dwelling as



Anna Swan and Admiral Dot. Pfening Archives.

the one occupied by the Ohio giants. A door that is 6 feet 6 inches high is a large size opening in a side of a house--that is, a dwelling house, not a cathedral. But the doors of the domicile of the Bates giants are 10 feet high, and the knobs are nearly as high as the reporter's head."

Furnishings, too, were built to scale. Anna loved to play a piano of ordinary size that was mounted on two foot high blocks. A pair of rocking chairs were so big, a reporter said he "had to climb into one of them the same as an infant would clamber into a high chair." Dishes and silverware came from Europe. Large windows were custom built from Anna's descriptions, and special marble was imported from Italy for the couple's huge fireplace. Bates hired farmhands to help with farm and became a "gentleman farmer," raising horse and cattle.

The couple were celebrities and became popular members of the Seville community. Assimilated into the town, Bates and his wife became

members of The First Baptist Church of Seville. The church even built custom-made pews for them. Anna was active in several church groups and befriended many of the women in the congregation.

Often, celebrities from abroad and from the circus and sideshow business would stop off in Seville to visit the famous couple Millie-Christine, the Siamese twins, stayed for a year. Lavinia Stratton, Tom Thumb's widow, stayed on the farm for a time after his death in 1883. Their friends from the business described the farm as a great place to rest and visit, and some even decided to buy property and stay. "I'm heading to see Bates out West," wrote a Cole Circus manager in a letter to some friends, "I hope to return from my visit rested and ready to get on with work. For now, I need peace and solitude and conversation with dear old friends." Several Barnum employees bought land and tended farms in the area after visiting the Bates homestead. One

former Barnum employee bought land and bred and raised doves, which he trained and sold to shows including the Cole and Barnum circuses.

They were on the Forepaugh show in 1877.

In 1878 they toured with the W. W. Cole Circus where they were exhibited not in the side show, but in the entrance to the menagerie, on a raised platform, of course, to accentuate their height. Two midgets, Count Rosebud and Baron Littlefinger, stood beside them, creating a striking contrast. Anna wore a silk dress said to have been made from eighty yards of material. Louis E. Cooke, Cole's brilliant press agent, commissioned a poster of them twelve feet wide and fifteen feet high. It was the largest circus poster printed to that time and necessitated the construction of special billboards to display it.

The couple was not averse to doing publicity for the Cole

show. In 1878 a St. Louis reporter commented: "Both Capt. And Mrs. Bates proved to be exceedingly obliging and good-tempered people, and when the reporter expressed a desire to have a good view of them standing along side of one another, they immediately took up the position desired. As they stood before him the reporter surveyed them with a critical eye. The result of his observation was that both individually and collectively they were a gigantic success in the most ample meaning of the expression."

In January of 1879, Anna gave birth to a baby boy that weighed over twenty-two pounds and was almost thirty inches tall. It was a difficult delivery and the child lived only one day. The baby was buried in what would become the family plot at Mound Hill Cemetery in Seville under a tombstone that read "Babe." The couple returned to the road with Cole in 1879 and worked several side shows and circuses in the early 1880's. In spite of receiving a large salary, said to be \$500 a week, plus

Col. Routh Goshan, The Arabian Giant. Pfening Archives.



the sale of photos of themselves, they were happier at home and content to tend the farm and visit friends and neighbors in Seville.

Col. Routh Goshan, a rival giant who had appeared on the Forepaugh and Barnum shows, gave a grouchy interview in which he debunked the height of his competitors. In it he said Anna was the taller of the couple, being 7' 1" with Martin checking in at 6' 11". While quite a bit shorter than their advertised dimensions, they were still extraordinarily tall, all the more so in the late 19th century when the average person was considerably shorter than today. Goshen's comments about Anna and Martin were benign; his real target was Chang the Chinese Giant, then with the Barnum show. He stated that Chang was in reality about 6' 6", and wore shoes with thick soles, five inch heels and other gimmicks to enhance his measurements. Although the Colonel himself was advertised as 8' tall, he gave his own unexaggerated height as 7' 3."

During the summer of 1888, Anna took sick and died of a heart ailment. Despite her size, Anna had enjoyed relatively good health all of her life, so her death came as a complete shock to the community, her friends, and especially her husband Martin. An obituary noted that, "Mrs. Swan Bates was a devout Christian, an excellent scholar, fond of congenial society and very charitable." At the time of her death she was the tallest woman to ever live in North America. She died the day before her 42nd birthday.

Crestfallen, Martin wired a company in Cleveland, Ohio for a specially built coffin to bury Anna. Apparently confused by the enormous measurements given to them, the company assumed the numbers were a mistake and sent a regular sized coffin to Seville. The burial had to be delayed



Capt. Bates with his second wife. Author's collection.

several days while the specially built coffin was constructed and shipped. The funeral was extravagant, large, and well attended by notables from the business as well as local admirers and friends. The *Seville Times*, reported, "the procession of carriages which followed the remains to their last resting place extended the whole distance lying between the house and the cemetery."

The crowd couldn't fit in the giant house and groups of Anna and Martin's friends congregated on the lawn, the porch, and the fields surrounding the farm. Several months after her death, a specially crafted monument was placed over Anna's grave. Martin designed the memorial himself, and picked a biblical verse from Psalm 17 for it that he felt best stated his love for his special wife: "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness. I shall be satisfied when I awake, with thy likeness."

After Anna's death, Martin preferred not to perform. Occasionally,

he would appear at a local fair or parade. Pictures of him in public show a gregarious man, smiling and waving from a carriage or open car during one local celebration or another. He continued to remain active in the local community and at the church. He married a woman from the church some years later and they moved from the giant house to a smaller place closer to town. Martin remained in Seville the rest of his life, died in 1919, and was buried in Mound Hill Cemetery with his family.

Although the giant house was eventually torn down, the graves of Martin and Anna can still be seen at Mound Hill Cemetery, which is located off Main Street, just east of Seville. Additionally, a display of their possessions and memorabilia can be seen at the John Smart House, the Medina County Historical Society's museum on North Elmwood Street in Medina. Still other artifacts are in the collection of the Seville Historical Society. These two organizations have shoes that belonged to the couple, rings which were sold as souvenirs at sideshows, several photographs, and a dresser that belonged to Anna.

BIBLIOGRAPHY, FURTHER READING, AND RESOURCES

Blakeley, Phyllis. *Nova Scotia's Two Remarkable Giants*, 1970, Lancelot Press.

Cavin, Lee. *There Were Giants on the Earth*, 1959, The Seville Chronicle.

Drimmer, Frederick. *Very Special People*, 1973, Arnjon Publishing.

Kunhardt, Philip et. al. P. T. Barnum: *America's Greatest Showman*, 1995, Alfred Knopf.

Langille, Jacqueline. *Giants Angus McAskill and Anna Swan*, 1990, Four East Publications.

Letcher Heritage News, Volume 8, Number 1. Pages 18-21. March, 1997. Letcher County Historical & Genealogical Society.

Murray, Zola. *Seville, Ohio*, 1941, The Banner Press Publishing.

Scarborough, Byron. *The Giants of Seville*, 2006, Lulu.Corn Publishing.

Swan, Susan. *The Biggest Modern Woman of the World*, 1983, Lester & Orpen Dennys Publishers.

Thomas Barry Hibernian Jester

By Robert Loeffler

Thomas Barry was an old-time Irish jester and theatrical manager. Some sources indicate he was born at Manchester, England in 1839, but his death certificate gives his year of birth as 1837 in Ireland. He grew up in the circus, his father, Tom Barry, Sr., being a famous white-faced clown at Astley's and other English venues. The elder Barry died in 1857.

A profile in the *New York Clipper* stated that Barry made his professional debut in 1847 in a pony race in Pablo Fanque's Circus at the Fall Trade Hall in Manchester, England. He was then apprenticed to Ned Briarly (known as Cobbler Ned) until he was seventeen years old. It was under Briarly's tutelage that he began clowning.

In 1852, when Mezappa was revived at Astley's Amphitheatre, Barry was on the bill as a clown. By 1858 he was with Jack Swallow's Circus after which he and Jack Boorne journeyed to Ireland where he was a great hit both in the ring and on stage. Leaving Boorne at Limmerick, Ireland, he performed alternately with Bell's, Hengler's and Newcomb's Circuses where he learned more about riding and clowning. He next joined Tom Price and the two toured in Spain and Portugal. Barry, however, soon left to go to Paris with David Richards. While there he supposedly met Frank Pastor, brother of Tony Pastor, and other Americans.

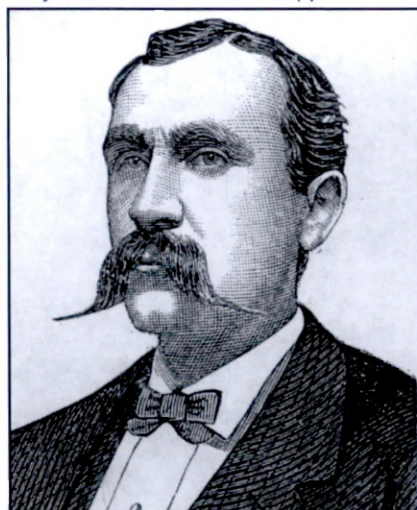
It was probably at this time that he learned about the advantages of clowning in the United States, planting the seed that he should go to America. Barry was next engaged by

Deshon's Cirque Napoleon where he leaped over nine horses without the benefit of a bed or running board. Richards was also on the bill as a hurdle race rider. In 1865 Barry put his own circus on the road. It didn't go, and he returned to Hengler's at Plymouth, England.

In 1869 Barry came to America, working for Stone and Murray's Combination Circus which opened the season at Bridgeport, Connecticut on April 12. He and another clown, named Reeves, were billed as "The Cornique Pantomimists." He returned to England for the winter season, appearing again with Hengler's.

He was on Lewis B. Lent's New York Circus in March and April 1870, after which he trouped with Dr. James Thayer's Circus where he was advertised as "the funniest man in

Thomas Barry as pictured in the May 18, 1889 *New York Clipper*.



Christendom." This engagement ended in July and Barry placed an at liberty ad in the *New York Clipper* which was evidently answered by his old employer, Stone and Murray. He appeared on their bills starting in August, staying with that show through the end of the tenting season. David Seal and George Adams were also clowns on Stone and Murray, and all three were called the "Clowns of London" on the bills. This company had a long season, playing Charleston, South Carolina in mid-December. Stone and Murray usually toured in the eastern states, often going in to New England. As far as is known, Barry returned to England or Ireland for the winter season of 1870-1871.

He returned to Stone and Murray for 1871. Organized in Brooklyn the company's personnel numbered 90 and used 100 horses. George Adams was also with the troupe. Other performers included Professor J. W. Hayden, a balloon ascensionist; Jeannette Ellster, the pre-performance wire walker from ground to the top of the center pole; the Cooke brothers, John Henry, six horse rider and horseback juggler, and Harry Welby, somersault rider; clown Den Stone; Emilie, Henrietta and Rosina, equestriennes; the Snow brothers with their dogs, and John H. Murray with his educated horses. Barry presented a comic pantomime entitled "The Bear and Sentinel," and did a "comic sketch, introducing a performing elephant," named Bolivar. In actuality, Bolivar was essentially a balloon in the shape of an elephant which had been manufactured in

Paris. Barry would balance Bolivar on his chin during the act. The Stone and Murray advertising played it with a straight face, always indicating that it was a live pachyderm. On October 26, while in Brooklyn, the show gave a benefit matinee performance for the victims of the Chicago fire.

Barry returned to England for the 1871-1872 winter circus and theatre season, where he was well received. He was back with Stone and Murray in 1872. While the title stayed the same, at least for part of the season, Murray operated it alone. Stone had left the partnership, casting his lot with Henry Barnum and James E. Kelley's Central Park Menagerie, which had been one of the two 1871 Van Amburgh units with a few more animals and a new coat of paint.

With Murray solely in charge, the personnel changed little. David Seal and George Adams were also clowns with the company when it appeared in Brooklyn in late April. Charles F. Reed, Harry Welby Cooke and Little George Ducrow were equestrians. Lizzie Keys, Mlle. Rosina, and Madame Elizabeth were female riders.

Like the other big-name clowns of the era, Barry sold a booklet of his comic songs to audience members. Surviving Barry song books are full of forgotten and forgettable songs with titles such as *The Art of Kissing*, *The Amateur Farmer*, *The Bill Poster's Dream* and the ever popular *Never Take the Horse Shoe from the Mule*. One of his songs contained this line: "A maiden spotless as the snow, and just about to marry, Was led to take so wise a step, By list'ning to Tom Barry."

Songsters, as they were called, were a major perk for the clowns as the profits from their sale were at times substantial, far more than their salaries. During the mid-1870s show owners realized the money the booklets generated, and began to sell the songster privilege as they would the candy stand or lemonade privilege.

Barry again went with Murray's troupe in 1873, now a railroad show advertising itself as "formerly Stone & Murray's Circus," an indication the title had drawing power. The eques-

trian John Henry Cooke and his family were the headliners. The show was strong on clowning, having five jesters. Besides Barry with "his wild and ponderous elephant" Bolivar, the clown alley included George Dunbar; Burcleau, the French trick

"especially wise, witty, and wonderful." By December of that year he was back in England, performing for Hengler's Circus. John Henry Cooke was also on the bill, which included a pantomime entitled "Little Red Riding Hood."

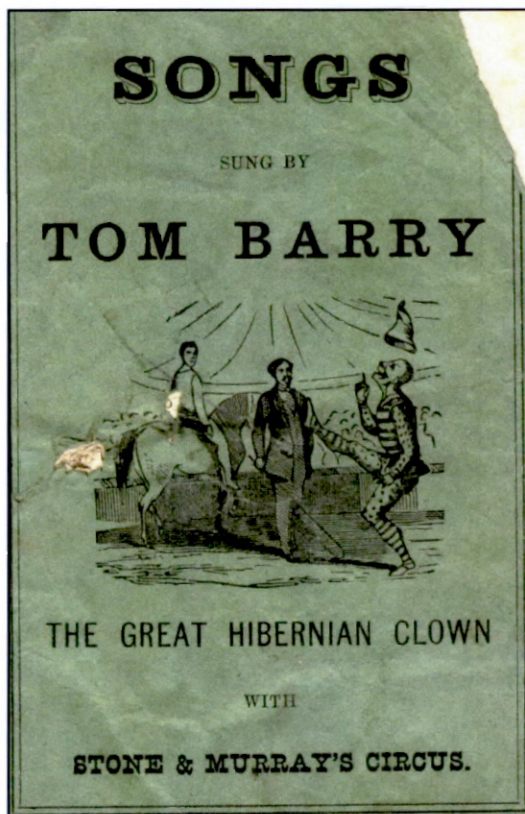
Murray was again his employer in 1875. The show's performance concluded with an equestrian drama entitled "Dick Turpin's Ride to York" with principal rider James E. Cooke in the title role. Barry was billed as "the favorite clown and vocalist," again sharing the mirth manufacturing with Ted Almonte.

Barry continued with Murray during the summer seasons of 1876 and 1877, spending the off-seasons performing at dime museums and variety theaters in the New York City area. He was with the Adam Forepaugh Circus in 1878, and the W. C. Coup Circus in 1879 and 1880. A Missouri newspaper praised him on Forepaugh: "The clown, Tom Barry, is a clown par excellence, a man who is at once witty and one who never stoops to vulgarity in order to get a laugh from the uncultured."

Another review of the Forepaugh show, this one in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* of June 18, 1878, noted: "The funny business was intrusted to the well known clowns Grimaldi and Tom Barry, and though few of their gags were absolutely new, yet they were free from coarseness."

By this time his career had peaked. The era of the one-ring performance which was the perfect venue for singing clowns such as Barry had given way to the age of spectacle in which the importance of individual clowns began to diminish. He spent the winters of 1879-1880 and 1880-1881 in England and Ireland, working on Tom Barry's Circus.

In 1881 Barry was back in his milieu with the Great Consolidated Van Amburgh Golden Menagerie and Frost's Roman Circus and Coliseum, singing comic songs and uttering witticisms. Sig Sebastian was the principal male rider. The Van



Barry songster sold on the Stone & Murray Circus.

trian John Henry Cooke and his family were the headliners. The show was strong on clowning, having five jesters. Besides Barry with "his wild and ponderous elephant" Bolivar, the clown alley included George Dunbar; Burcleau, the French trick

clown," George Adams, and Frank Donaldson. They provided "fun without limit," wrote the inimitable Charles H. Day, the show's bill writer and press agent. When the show played Salem, New Jersey in October, Barry, "on behalf of a resident of the town," presented John Henry Cooke with a statue of a jockey mounted on a horse. It was seven inches high and nine inches long. The *Clipper* reported it would be exhibited at Tiffany's in New York City for a few days prior to Cooke's departure for Europe on October 18.

Barry was in England and Ireland during the winter of 1873-1874, and spent the 1874 summer season back in the states, again with John Murray. He shared the clowning with Ted Almonte, an Englishman. A review of the show called them


Amburgh troupe was one of the few well known circuses that didn't convert to rail in the 1870s, continuing to rely on wagons, 58 of them their advertising claimed, to convey the show. It apparently paid the price for eschewing the new technology as its equipment and animals were auctioned late in the season. Later in the year, Barry ran a side show at Coney Island with H. R. Jacobs.

Barry apparently made friends easily and wasn't a braggart. Charles Day, the great bill writer and historian, wrote of him: "Tom has much of the English professional desire to run 'a public' and surround himself with friends to whom he can recall the past as he serves a glass. Mr. Barry has always been both a jester and gentleman and one of the emigrants from abroad who has never boasted of his intimacy with the Queen and the royal family at 'ome' or made himself odious in the dressing room by relating how much better everything is done 'over there.'"

He was back with the Forepaugh show in 1882. He was selected by his peers in June to present Eddy Silbon, the acrobat and gymnast, with a gold watch and chain from them.

The Forepaugh show featured Tom Barry in this lithograph. John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Tibbals digital collection.

MURRAY'S ILLUSTRATED NEWS.



JOHN MURRAY'S GREAT RAIL ROAD CIRCUS

ELEVENTH ANNUAL TOUR.
"REFINED GOLD NEEDS NO GILDING."

THIS established Company, founded by Stone and Murray, requires no expostious laudation to convince the public of its unrivalled merits. Mr. Murray has the pleasure to announce that the following European Circulists from HENGLER'S GRAND CIRQUE, LONDON, will make their first appearance in America.

Mlle. LOUISE,
PREMIER EQUESTRIENNE.

Mlle. EMMA,
EQUESTRIENNE.

WM. FREDERICKS,
Barback Rider and exponent of the "Bouncing Jockey."

JOHN COTTRELL,
Trick Clown, Versatile Artist and Globe Runner.

ALMONTE,
The Children's Clown, who has been fulfilling an engagement at Hengler's Glasgow Circus, will amuse the little folks.

Re-engagement of
SEÑORITA MILLIE TURNOUR,
Equestrienne and "Queen of the Air."

Re-engagement of
WOODA COOK,
CHAMPION SOMERSAULT RIDER OF THE WORLD!

Special Engagement of
JAMES E. COOKE,
For the role of "DICK TURPIN" and the riding of his marvellous SIX HORSE ACT!

Re-engagement of
TOM BARRY,
THE FAVORITE CLOWN AND VOCALIST.

First Appearance in two years of the
LECLAIRE BROTHERS,
Greatest Clowns; Mr. Shad LeClaire in an astonishing Trapeze Act, terminating with a FLIGHT THROUGH BALLOONS; Mr. John LeClaire in a surprising series of feats upon Pyramids of

FIFTEEN TRICK HORSES,
including the intelligent marvel BLACK EAGLE, and the beautiful BLACK BESS, the best trained and most valuable stud of horses on this continent. Four funny males, the humorists of the ring, Bro. Harle, Petrolina V. Nushy, Mark Twain, and Josh Billings.

Every Afternoon and Evening Wm. Fredericks will introduce his Performing Goat PETE, in an amusing act entitled: "THE CLOWN AND THE GOAT."

Every Afternoon the extraordinarily laughable Afterpiece, entitled
THE CLOWN'S OMNIBUS,
or
FUN FOR EVERYBODY.

EVERY NIGHT the amusement will terminate with the thrilling Equestrian Romance, dramatized from Alasworth's "Tyr," entitled,
**DICK TURPIN'S
RIDE TO YORK.**

Dick Turpin, James E. Cooke
Tom King, John H. Murray
Black Don, the matchless mare, Black Don

Supported by the entire Company.

The rendition of this Grand Spectacle never fails to awaken the wildest enthusiasm.

Musical by MENTZER'S BAND, ALMON EDGAR MENTZER, Conductor.

FREE PAGEANT
in the streets every day at 10 o'clock A.M., magnificent features of which are

THE GREAT GOLDEN CAR "TRIUMPH,"
bearing therein Master's Band, richly uniformed, drawn by

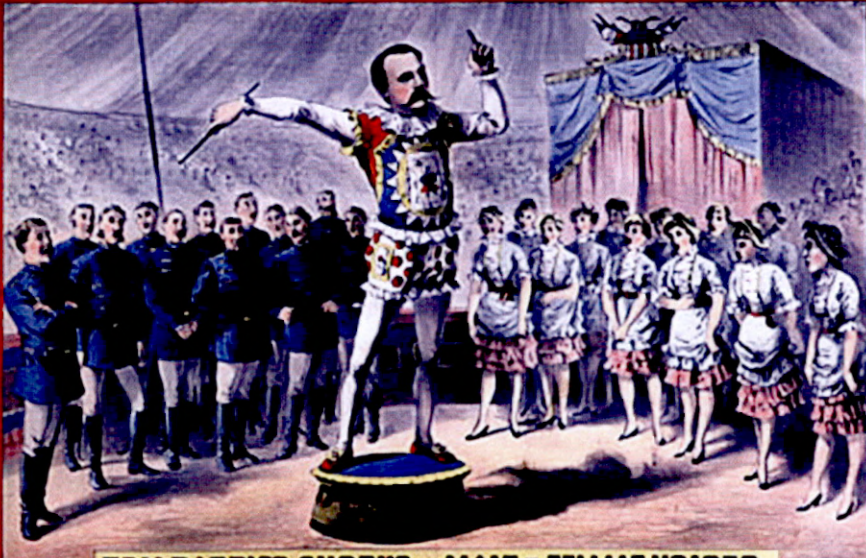
EIGHTEEN ARABIAN STEEDS,
reined by Maria J. H. Paul;

THE FAIRY PHAETON,
drawn by Eighteen Little Shetland Ponies, driven by Master Joe Barreclough.

OBSERVE.

1. The Exhibition is given under one tent, in ALL CIRCLES, and under the personal direction of John H. Murray.
2. Courteous values attend the ladies in carpeted seats.
3. Smoking in the grand gas-lit pavilion prohibited.
4. Good order preserved by our own special officers co-operating.

FOREPAUGH'S GREAT AGGREGATION MUSEUM, MENAGERIE AND TRIPLE CIRCUS



TOM BARRY'S CHORUS OF MALE & FEMALE VOICES.
THE LARGEST SHOW IN THE WORLD.

A page in the 1880 John Murray Circus courier listed Barry as a feature.

An indication that Barry's career was sloping downward appeared in the *Fort Wayne Daily Gazette* of July 9, 1882: "Johnny Purvis, the Irish clown, introduces a couple of aesthetic donkeys, whose intellegend is something wonderful. Tom Barry, his brother fool, sings a song with assistance of the colored Jubilee Singers, which, by the by, could be omitted with advantage."

He remained with Forepaugh through September when he joined W. O'Dale Stevens Australian Circus, an opera house show with some real sawdust talent including the elite riders Robert Stickney, Emma Lake, and Linda and Elena Jeal. The performance concluded with the equestrian drama "Dick Turpin's Ride to York." A reviewer gave Barry faint

praise: "After the regular circus entr6e, Andrew Gaffney is seen in closer manipulations of heavy-shot; then Elena Jeal in an equestrian act receives her full share of applause; and the little folks are greatly amused when Prof. Samwell puts his performing dogs through their funny business. . . . Tom Barry's clowning, too, is not the least attractive feature of the show, and was provocative of much mirth. Emma Lake exemplifies exceptionally good horsemanship and is rewarded for her artistic efforts."

Barry continued with Stevens through 1884, taking a break to exhibit a "Sea on Land" show at Coney Island during the summer of 1883. C. Sylvan was his partner in this venture. Around this time he was also associated with Healy and Bigelow in an Indian Patent Medicine show. Back in England in 1884, he sailed down the Thames River in a wash tub drawn by four geese.

Barry was back with Hyatt Frost in 1885 on his Van Amburgh & Reiche Brothers New Railroad Shows, American and Japanese Circus, Aquarium and Menagerie. Charles and Henry Reiche, Frost's partners and probably his bankroll, had been associated with William C. Coup in the New York Aquarium. Their main business, however, was the importation of exotic birds and wild animals. The show's features were a 25 cent admission fee, and the Quedah, the "Mysterious Malay Mountain Mammoth," which was some sort of hairy elephant. The ads said it was the "First Discovered since the Deluge." Barry, the only clown with the troupe, was in his element as his talents could be showcased in the one ring environment. The Worcester, Massachusetts *Daily Times* noted: "The jokes of the old clown were new, and no chestnuts were heard." This was high praise as most reviewers knocked the few remaining talking clowns for using the same jokes and songs decade after decade.

Barry returned to England by December 1885 where he clowned with Paragon's Circus in London. Early the year next he was with

At Amesbury Mills,
MONDAY, JUNE 19.

Stone and Murray's
CIRCUS!

GRAND FREE ATTRACTION!
Congress of Talented Artists!!
Sensation of the Period!

'Announcement Extraordinary!
The Management feel it due the public to return, through the channel of the press, an acknowledgement for the liberal encouragement of their every effort to put before an appreciative patronage a chaste, high-toned and respectable entertainment. In the present attempt to gather and organize new and meritorious attractions, they have been actuated by a well-matured desire to add to their already large list of valuable friends, and they announce this the most **UNPRECEDENTED SUCCESS OF THE AGE.**

DEN STONE,
the well-known world's greatest Jester.

TOM BARRY,
(First appearance in America,) and the only Hibernian Clown and Vocalist, with his performing Elephant in a Comic Sketch.



Barry was listed in this 1871 Stone & Murray newspaper ad.

Rolland's Circus. He returned to America in the spring of 1886 to troupe with the Frank A. Robbins Circus. In the fall he bought an interest in an Uncle Tom's Cabin

Company, partnering with George Peck. Soon after, he was with the Starr Opera Company, owned by George O. Starr, a Barnum and London Circus executive who took out the show as a winter sideline.

His circus career was winding down. He was again with Robbins in the summers of 1887 and 1888, but during these years he managed Lewis Phillips's Pavilion, presumably a variety theater, at Dutchtown, New York. He also took out a production called "Putnam, the Iron Son of '76." In the late 1880s he managed the Grand Street Museum in New York City. Around this time the *New York Clipper* considered him "one of the most successful museum and circus manager we have. . . . His success as a manager is shown by the manner in which the Grand has come to the front. He is a hale fellow well met, and although a strict disciplinarian, is held in high esteem by all who know him."

Barry then moved up the Hudson River to manage the Gaiety Theater in Albany. In June 1890 a local politician rebuilt the old Great Street Theater for about \$20,000, renaming it the Gaiety. It reopened on September 15 with Barry as business manager and Irish comedian. In January 1891 he brought in George Starr, his old associate, with his Starr Opera Company. It was a disaster. On opening night of what was supposed to be a nine day engagement, virtually the entire audience left before the final curtain, after which Barry cancelled the remaining dates.

Then something happened. Barry is listed as the proprietor of the Gaiety Theater in the Albany city directory each year from 1891 to 1894. He is absent from the 1895 edition, but Agnes, his wife, is listed in his stead as manager of the Gaiety. It appears Barry became incapacitated in late 1894. Unable to performance his duties, his wife took over, and city directories associate her with the Gaiety Theater through 1909.

About 1895 the Barrys moved to nearby Rensselaer where Tom Barry died on January 16, 1909. He is buried in Oakwood Cemetery in Troy, New York. His death certificate gives his occupation as "actor."

Bill Woodcock's Circus Album

On August 27, 1930 Ed Kelty took this photo of the Sells Floto elephant department at Newark, New Jersey. The big guy seated in the center is the boss, Clyde Heinrich "Highpockets" Baudendistel. On his right is Charles "Front Door" Morgan, and on his left is my dad, William Woodcock. These three presented the elephant acts during the performance.

Dave Price sent me several letters written by Highpockets when he was in charge of the Sells Floto elephants in the early 1930s. They shed surprising light on his character. His handwriting was beautiful, even written in green ink on blue stationery, to Master Bobby Gabel, a schoolboy. He filled the kid in on the events of the day including tidbits on Tom Mix. He even mentioned that he had informed Zack Terrell, the manager, of their correspondence so he must have been the son of someone important. High even so far as to instruct the boy to be sure to make good grades.

In 1923 Danny Odom was made manager of the John Robinson Circus, wintering in West Baden, Indiana. Also new to that show was Cheerful Gardner who the American Circus Corporation had just hired away from Al G. Barnes. When my dad got wind of Gardner going over to Robinson, he made a bee line for West Baden to once again work for Gardner and Highpockets, who was also on the show. Shortly after dad



arrived there, he learned that the show would be moving up to Peru since a decision had made to close the Gollmar show and the best of that show's equipment would go to

Robinson.

The night before they were to pull out for Peru, Highpockets went out to load some hay in the bull car and in so doing also decided to have a nip or two from the old jug. He fell asleep, tipped over a kerosene lantern, and set the car ablaze. Panic ensued since the car was coupled to the rest of the train. My dad brought out an elephant named Betty, hoping she could push the bull car away from the rest of the train, unaware that she wasn't broke to push. He told me that it was surprising she didn't take off across the countryside the same as Highpockets did.

The bull car was burned to the water line and after Cheerful and Danny Odom arrived from the hotel my dad noticed that Odom was carrying a pistol which accounted for Highpockets's hasty departure.



Anyway, they eventually got to Peru and Cheerful started to work on the four baby elephants that had been delivered to the Gollmar show the previous summer, Jewel, Pearl, Judy, and Modoc.

The next photo shows the Sparks Circus parade in the 1910s. This tableau wagon was used as the number two bandwagon. From this angle you can't see much detail on the vehicle, but I like the feeling of pictures such as this. It shows the

teamster and brakeman at work, kids running along the side, and people looking out windows.

The musicians are in a relaxed position, having completed a selection. No sheet music was needed since as the wagon moved along the band had a new audience every block, allowing the windjammers to play the same tune over and over. "Two Tune" Ric Albani from the Big Apple Circus would have loved to direct this band.

Next, we have a lot scene of the Jack Hoxie Circus in 1937. What a nice little show this appears to be. I don't know who bank rolled it, but Jack Hoxie, a western movie star, had already been featured with several circuses and this one bearing his name looks very nice on the lot. The show is well painted, and you can see the light plant at left and a first-class RV of the day next to it.

To the right we see the truck carrying Mena the elephant, who no longer had to walk from town to town. More often than not, when



motorized shows first started carrying elephants the trucks had no roof like this one. I wonder if this was done to prevent the elephants from punching holes in it? You would think that by so doing, the structure would be so weakened that they could come right through the walls.



Our last image is of the dapper Steve Fanning. He started out around elephants with Floyd King in the late 1940s. King entered into a partnership with the Cristianis in 1950. All of a sudden Fanning was now in charge of a dozen elephants, three from King, four from the Cristianis, and five from Dailey Bros. When this partnership dissolved in 1954 Steve went with the Cristianis and was their boss elephant man. In 1958 the Cristianis Bros. Circus leased eight elephants from Tony Diano which brought the total on the show to 18. This big herd was one of the reasons the show was the major tented circus in the country.

When the Cristianis show went off the road in 1960 the "Pete and Norma Five," the group from Dailey Bros., were sold to the Beatty show, and Fanning went with them. For some reason he didn't stay there long, but wound up with the James E. Strates Carnival where he was reunited with Floyd King's elephants from 1950--Alice, Mona and Margie.

**Plan to attend the
Circus Historical Society
Convention in Las Vegas, Nevada
October 1 to October 4**

Bill Kasiska's Letterheads

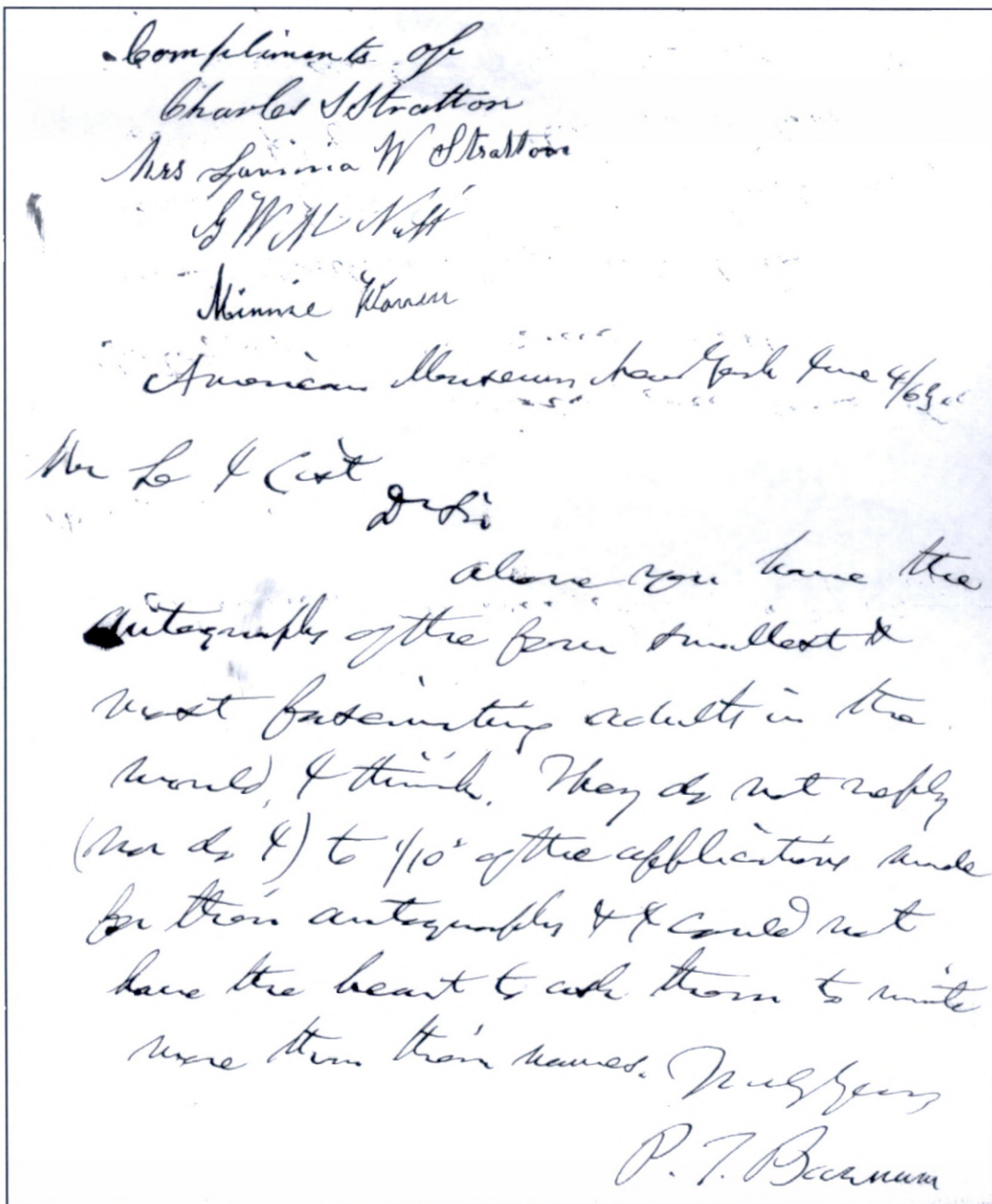
Lewis Jacob Cist (1818-1885) was a Cincinnati banker whose avocation was writing bad poetry and whose hobby was collecting autographs. Forgotten today, he was popular enough in his day to be chosen as one of a hundred writers whose signatures were analyzed by Edgar Allan Poe in his classic 1841 study of handwriting. Poe later favorably reviewed a volume of Cist's poetry.

Many letters to Cist from notables survive in libraries and archives, an indication of how relentlessly he pursued his hobby. In the spring of 1863 he wrote P. T. Barnum at his American Museum in New York City with the audacious request for not only a signed letter from Barnum, but also missives from his four star attractions, the newly wedded Mr. and Mrs. Tom Thumb, Commodore Nutt, and Minnie Warren.

Remarkably Barnum and his diminutive performers partially fulfilled Cist's request. Perhaps they were

familiar with his poetry; he was, in fact, a minor celebrity. Barnum responded on June 4, 1863: "Above you have the autographs of the four smallest and most fascinating adults in the world, I think. They do not reply (nor do I) to 1/10 of the applications made for their autographs & I could not have the heart to ask them to write more than their names." Underneath the great man scribbled his signature.

The Thumbs signed their real names: Charles S. Stratton and Mrs. Lavinia W. Stratton. Commodore Nutt signed G. W. M. Nutt, the initials standing for George Washington Morrison. Minnie Warren (nee Bump), Lavinia's sister, was the last to sign. The letter reminds us of the popularity of Barnum's Lilliputians a century and half ago, and that fame, manifested here in the desire for celebrity signatures, was going strong before the age of mass electronic communication.



RINGLING BROS CIRCUS



Decatur, Wed., SEPT. 4